

Screen

50p / \$1.50

**The J of the Society for
Educa ... Film and Television
Spring 1972**

8211.7548

SCIENCE

Realism / Technology / Ideology

Walter Benjamin:

Short History of Photography

Cinématique / Cahiers

Deep focus - analysis, criticism

Lorrimer screenplays

Ideal texts for discussion and

Latest titles include:

Blow-Up

MICHELANGELO

ANTONIONI

Illustrated. Cloth £2.10, paper £1.05.

Oedipus Rex

PIER PAOLO PASOLINI

Illustrated. Cloth £2.10, paper £1.05.

Greed

ERICH von STROHEIM

Complete screenplay. Illustrated. Cloth £4.95, paper £1.95.

as given below.

Roses of
Shaw
Illustrated

300.

from the East

JEAN-LUC GODARD

Illustrated. Cloth £2.50, paper £1.26.

*Please send for our complete list
of published scripts*

Lorrimer 47 Dean Street London W1

OBSOLETE!

Our old black catalogue is obsolete. This is now replaced by an up-to-date SECTION 1 (containing recent additions as well), price 50p (inc. postage).

Section 2 & 3 also costs 50p. When bought together, reduced to 80p.

Over 1,000 films available, write to:—

CONTEMPORARY FILMS

55 Greek Street,
London, W1V 6DB.

UNITED FILM SERVICES

**HUNDREDS OF 16mm SOUND
EDUCATIONAL FILMS**

- also 400 educational 16mm silent titles
- good stock of secondhand 16mm projectors (over 100 new and secondhand projectors sold each year)
- Free lists. Viewing facilities.

**13 KING STREET
LEICESTER LE1 6RN**

Telephone: 20708

This number of *Screen* centres on problems of realism in the cinema suggested in part by the most recent 'Soviet' number of *Screen* (v 12 n 4) and by the strength of that aesthetic position in British cinema and cinema criticism. Most theoretical writing on the cinema has adopted a 'realist' perspective. Work on realism seemed important to *Screen* for that reason and also as part of a more general move of the journal towards defining and understanding British film culture and our own position within it.

The articles printed relate to each other insofar as they centre on cinema technology, aesthetics and questions of ideology. They do not present a single view and indeed contradict each other and begin from very different positions. It is in the area of contradictions and differences that a clearer view of the problems relating to realism emerge.

Walter Benjamin in his essay on the origins of photography and the impact of this new technological invention on art and concepts about art quotes Bertolt Brecht – '... less than at any time does a simple reproduction of reality tell us anything about reality ...' Benjamin argues for a *constructive* photography rather than a *creative* one, a photography proceeding from experiment and instruction, breaking down and re-synthesising rather than merely reflecting. He cites in this respect the cinema of the Soviet Union, debates on which *Screen* recently published and which have also been reproduced and analysed in considerable depth in *Cahiers du Cinema* and in *Cinéthique*.

Brecht's statement on art can be extended to criticisms of art. We print *Cinéthique's* criticism of *Cahiers du Cinema* for reproducing texts from the early period of the Soviet cinema without sufficient historical understanding of the origins and place of these texts. This lack of a context for ideas and techniques (the theory and practice of montage) creates according to *Cinéthique* a false impression and gives the texts an inaccurate significance.

... historical events themselves ought to be the point of reference for assessing the articles ... Eisenstein's written work is closely linked to a precise historical context and ... the critic cannot, on pain of being shown up by the work itself, attempt to analyse their meaning except through a documented and critical reading of their relationship to that context. ...'

It is precisely this lack of context that is the basis of Christopher Williams' critique of Patrick Ogle's account of the origins of deep focus photography. The history which Ogle presents, with its narrow view of technology framed by progressist notions, makes deep focus appear as a natural, self-evident, inevitable, 'development', a sense of one invention following upon another. And even

if the technology is linked to aesthetic ideas, these ideas are made to seem without a history. Realism suddenly appears.

It is one of the strategies of the practice of realism in the cinema to make what appears on the screen self-evident and natural, a 'truth'. The explication of realism and deep focus by Ogle is itself a realist presentation where an ideology (about history, technology, aesthetics) appears as indisputable fact while the essay itself explicitly avoids the ideological and economic context for the production of deep focus techniques and an aesthetic centring on spatial realism.

Andrew Tudor goes some way towards demystifying the notion of realism by questioning its descriptive relevance and pointing out the relativism of the term: there are many realisms and these realisms are themselves artistic conventions.

It does not seem clear what kind of an understanding such an exercise constitutes. If realism as a descriptive and critical term lacks any absolute status, it has an historical one. And as with montage or deep focus the history of the term or technique would reveal more than the dead-end empiricism of a position which simply reduces itself to 'realism is used in many ways'.

Paul Willemsen structurally locates the term realism and attempts to develop a precise language for the analysis of the term and for an analysis of cinema. He breaks down conventional assumptions about form and content, seeks to re-synthesise these and tries as well to provide productive divisions about realism which can illuminate both changes in cinema technology and changes in cinema conventions (most particularly the notion of film *genre*).

Work on realism needs to be continued not only in relation to specific areas like British film culture, Italian 'neo-realism', but in relation to certain problems some of which have been raised in this number of *Screen*.

– the historical origins of the division aesthetics and politics and the related division, science and ideology; if realism pretends to a notion of objectivity so indeed does science which as a notion is sometimes used as the tool to expose ideology eg

'The semantic content of a sign is simply one face of the sign and is constitutive of it, but it can only be grasped, not by reading . . . the text in an ideological manner . . . but by reading it scientifically'. (v 12 n 4 p 166);

– a questioning of the 'scientific' status and the assumed ideology of linguistic/semiological analyses; a testing of theories, eg that suggested by Paul Willemsen, in concrete analyses of film;

– an historical analysis of theories so-called like the auteur theory and a re-interpretation of notions of genre in relation to factors of production, economics, politics as well as to aesthetics;

– a more detailed application of history to the study of the cinema, not in the conventional developmental Lumiere to Godard manner,

- 4 but one in the first instance reflective and critical of the technology progression or the compartmentalised aesthetic history for the most part practised.

The work of SEFT over the past 18 months has been made difficult by a conflict with the British Film Institute, the attempt to both organise film teachers and to reflect on film education and the general film culture.

The administrative and editorial work of SEFT has been done by a staff of 2 people. Diana Matias, as editorial and administrative assistant has been involved in this work from the beginning and whatever success it has had is due to her efforts. Miss Matias is now leaving SEFT. The Committee and editorial boards of *Screen* and the *Notes* and I would like to express our appreciation for the work she has done in helping to strengthen and transform the Society.

Problems of space prevented us from giving proper acknowledgement to Elizabeth Henderson for her translations of the two Mayakovsky film scenarios published in Screen vol 12 n 4. We are grateful to Miss Henderson for giving Screen the opportunity of publishing this material.
—(Editor).

Walter Benjamin

The fog surrounding the origins of photography is not quite as thick as that enveloping the beginnings of printing. In the case of the former it was perhaps more obvious that the hour of invention had arrived, for it had been apprehended by a number of people: men striving independently towards the same goal, that is, to capture images in the *camera obscura* which had certainly been known since Leonardo's time, if not before. When Niépce and Daguerre, after approximately fifty years of experiment, succeeded in doing this simultaneously, the state used the legal difficulties encountered by the inventors over patent rights to assume control of the enterprise, thereby making it public by covering its costs. In this way the conditions were established for a continuously accelerating development which for a long period foreclosed all retrospective appraisal. This is why the historical or, if you like, philosophical questions relating to the rise and fall of photography have remained unattended for decades. And if today we are becoming conscious of them, there is a precise reason for it. Recent studies start from the striking fact that the prime of photography – the work of Hill, Cameron, Hugo and Nadar – occurs in its first decade. But that is the decade which precedes its industrialisation. Not that this early period was not already full of market vendors and charlatans who had mastered the new technique for the sake of profit; indeed they did so on a mass scale. But the latter belonged to the fairground and its traditional arts, where photography has always been at home, rather than to industry. Industry conquered the field with the visiting-card snapshot, its first manufacturer characteristically becoming a millionaire. It would not be surprising if the photographic practices which today, for the first time, direct our gaze back to that pre-industrial prime, turned out to be linked subterraneously with the crisis of capitalism. But that does not allow us to pretend that the charm of the older pictures, such as have recently appeared in handsome volumes,¹ can provide real insights into the nature of photography. Attempts to master the subject theoretically have so far proved thoroughly rudimentary. And in the previous century none of the many debates on the matter could be free of that scurrilous schema, illustrated by the way in which a chauvinist rag, the *Leipzig City Advertiser*, sought to counteract the French art of the devil: 'To try to catch transient reflected images', it states, 'is not merely something that is impossible, but, as a thorough German investigation has shown, the

* *A Short History of Photography* was originally published in *The Literarische Welt* of 18.9., 25.9. and 2.10.1931.

6 very desire to do so is blasphemy. Man is created in the image of God and God's image cannot be captured by any human machine. Only the divine artist, divinely inspired, may be allowed, in a moment of solemnity, at the higher call of his genius, to dare to reproduce the divine-human features, but never by means of a mechanical aid! here, in all its ponderous vulgarity, treads forth the philistine notion of art, dismissive of every technical consideration, yet sensing its doom as the new technology makes its provocative entry. Nevertheless, it is this fetishistic, fundamentally anti-technical notion of *Art* with which theorists of photography have tussled for almost a century without, of course, achieving the slightest result. For they sought nothing beyond acquiring credentials for the photographer from the judgment-seat which he had already overturned. An entirely different atmosphere emanates from the exposé which the physicist Arago presented to the Chamber of Deputies on July 3, 1838 in favour of Daguerre's invention. What is attractive about this speech is how it manages to touch on all sides of human activity. It sketches a panorama large enough to render unimportant the dubious credentials which photography is prevailed upon (even here) to accept from painting and to open up instead the real possibilities of the invention. 'When inventors of a new instrument', says Arago, 'apply it to the observation of nature, the hopes that they place upon it are always insignificant compared with the number of subsequent discoveries of which the instrument was the origin'. In a single sweep this speech embraces the field of new technologies from astrophysics to philology: the prospect of stellar photography is adjoined by the idea of photographing a corpus of Egyptian hieroglyphs.

Daguerre's photographs were iodised silver plates exposed in the dark room which, by being turned about in the correct lighting, would reveal a delicate-grey picture. They were unique copies and in 1839 averaged 25 gold francs a plate. Not uncommonly they were kept in cases like jewellery. In the hands of many painters, however, they became technical aids. Just as seventy years later Utrillo painted his fascinating pictures of the Parisian suburbs not from real life, but from postcards, so the respected English portraitist, David Octavius Hill used a large number of portrait-photographs for his fresco of the first general synod of the Scottish Church in 1843. But he took these pictures himself. And it is these humble aids designed for internal use, which have given his name to its historical place, while as a painter he is forgotten. Certain of his studies actually penetrate further into the new technique than this series of portrait heads: these are anonymous pictures of people. Painting has known heads like these for a long time. Where a painting belonged to the family, one might from time to time enquire after the originals of the portraits. But within two or three generations the interest dies: the pictures, to the extent that they survive, do so only as testimony to the art of the person

who painted them. In photography, however, one encounters a new and strange phenomenon: in that fishwife from Newhaven,* who casts her eyes down with such casual, seductive shame, there remains something that does not merely testify to the art of Hill the photographer, but something that cannot be silenced, that impudently demands the name of the person who lived at the time and who, remaining real even now, will never yield herself up entirely into art.

And I ask: how did the beauty of this hair
and this look encircle the earlier beings:
How did this mouth kiss to which desire
unconsciously curls like smoke without a flame.

Or look at the picture of Dauthendey, the photographer, father of the poet, taken when he was engaged to the woman whom one day, shortly after the birth of her sixth child, he was to find lying with slashed wrists in the bedroom of his Moscow home. Here she is seen standing next to him, he appears to have his arm round her; yet her gaze reaches beyond him, absorbed into an ominous distance.† Look at such a picture long enough and you realise how much the opposites come together yet again: the most exact technique can give its products a magical value which a painted picture can no longer have for us. However skilful the photographer, however carefully he poses his model, the spectator feels an irresistible compulsion to look for the tiny spark of chance, of the here and now, with which reality has, as it were, seared the character in the picture; to find that imperceptible point at which, in the immediacy of that long-past moment, the future so persuasively inserts itself that, looking back, we may rediscover it. It is indeed a different nature that speaks to the camera from the one which addresses the eye; different above all in the sense that instead of a space worked through by a human consciousness there appears one which is affected unconsciously. It is possible, for example, however roughly, to describe the way somebody walks, but it is impossible to say anything about that fraction of a second when a person *starts to walk*. Photography with its various aids (lenses, enlargements) can reveal this moment. Photography makes aware for the first time the optical unconscious, just as psychoanalysis discloses the instinctual unconscious. Structural qualities, cellular tissues, which form the natural business of technology and medicine are all much more closely related to the camera than to the atmospheric landscape or the expressive portrait. At the same time photography uncovers in this material physiognomic aspects of pictorial words which live in the smallest things, perceptible yet covert enough to find shelter in daydreams, but which, once enlarged and capable of formulation, show the difference between technology and magic to be entirely a matter of historical

* See plate 1, p 9

† See plate 2, p 10

8 variables. Thus Blossfeldt,² in his astonishing plant photography,* revealed the most ancient column forms in pewter-glass, totem-poles in ten times magnified sprigs of chestnut and acorn, gothic tracery in teasel. Hence Hill's models were not all that far from the truth when they felt 'the phenomenon of photography' still to be 'a great mysterious experience', even if this feeling was no more than the consciousness of 'standing in front of an instrument which in the briefest span of time could produce a picture of the invisible surrounding world which appeared as alive and real as nature itself'. It was said of Hill's camera that it maintained a discreet reserve. But his models were no less reserved: they preserved a certain shyness before the camera and the motto of a later photographer of the heyday: 'Don't look at the camera' could well have been derived from their behaviour. But there it was not a question of the photographed animals, people or babies 'looking at you', which implicated the customer in so impure a fashion and to which no better reply can be made than the elder Dauthendey's comment on the daguerrotype: 'People were afraid at first', he reported, 'to look for any length of time at the pictures he produced. They were embarrassed by the clarity of these figures and believed that the little, tiny faces of the people in the pictures could see out at them, so amazing did the unaccustomed detail and the unaccustomed truth to nature of the first daguerrotype pictures appear to everyone'.

In the visual world of photography the first people reproduced made their appearance unblemished or rather uncaptioned. Newspapers were still luxuries which one rarely bought, but rather looked at in cafés. As yet they made no use of photography, nor did the overwhelming majority of people see their name in print. The human face was surrounded by a silence inside which the gaze was in repose. In short, all the possibilities of portraiture depended on an absence of contact between photography and actuality. Many of Hill's portraits were taken in the Greyfriars cemetery of Edinburgh† and nothing is more characteristic of this period than the extent to which his models seemed at home there. Indeed, in one of Hill's pictures the cemetery looks like an interior, a secluded, enclosed space in which the tombstones, set against partition-walls, rise up from the grass, hollowed out like chimney-pieces with inscriptions taking the place of flames. Nevertheless, this location could never have achieved its effect, had there not been good technical reasons for choosing it. The earlier plates were far less sensitive to light and this necessitated long exposures in the open. This in turn made it desirable to place the subject in as secluded a spot as possible where nothing could disturb concentration. 'The synthesis of expression brought about by the length of time that a model has to stand still', says Orlik of the early photography, 'is the main

* See plate 3, p 11

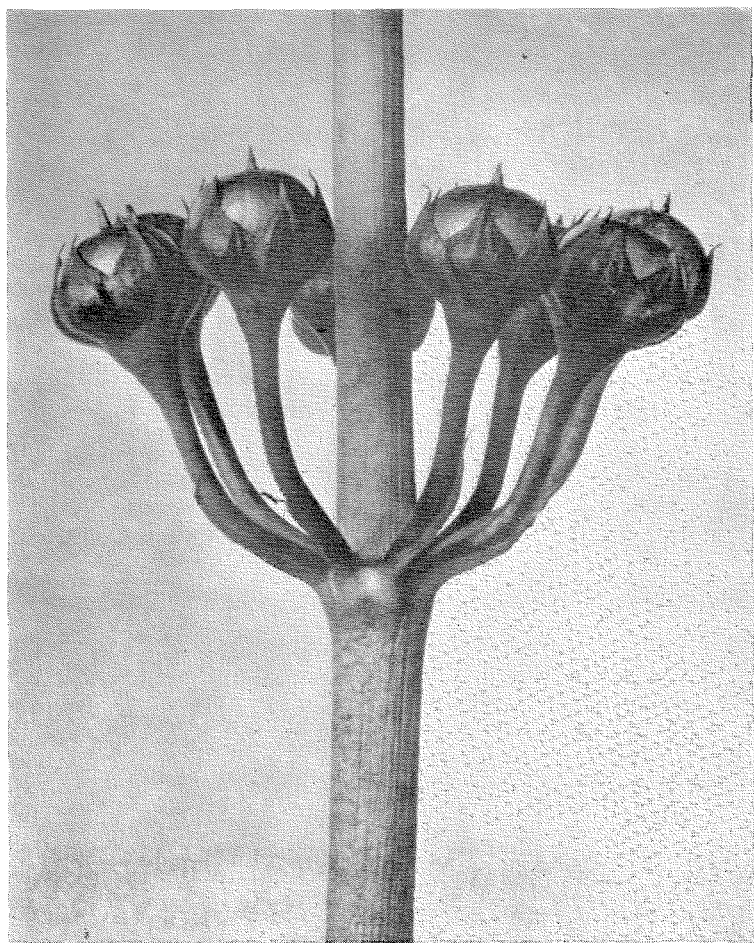
† See plate 4, p 12



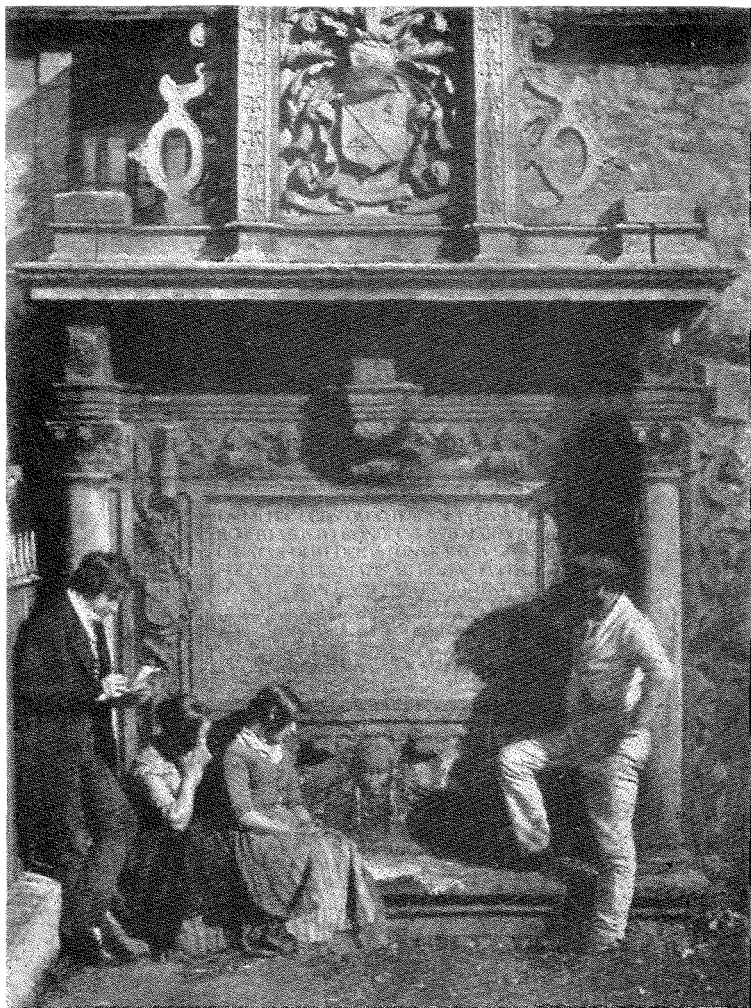
Newhaven, Elizabeth Johnstone, the beautiful fishwife: (Photo. David Octavius Hill)



The photographer Karl Dauthendey with his betrothed Miss Friedrich, St Petersburg, 1957



From: Karl Blossfeldt, *Wunder in der Natur* (pub. Leipzig 1942)



Edinburgh, Greyfriars Churchyard: (Photo. David Octavius Hill)



Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, 1850 (by an unknown German photographer)



Christian Rauch, sculptor, Berlin, 1847. (Photo. Hermann Biouw). Reproduced by permission of the Staatliche Landesbildstelle, Hamburg.



Versailles c.1910: (Photo. Eugene Atget) The Collection, The Museum of Modern Art, New York.



Peasant couple, 1931 (Photo. August Sander)

reason why these pictures, apart from their simplicity, resemble well-drawn or painted portraits and have a more penetrating and lasting effect on the spectator than more recent photography'. The procedure itself taught the models to live inside rather than outside the moment. During the long duration of these shots they grew as it were into the picture and in this way presented an extreme opposite to the figures on a snapshot. For the latter corresponds to that transformed world where, as Kracauer aptly remarked, it is the split second of the exposure which decides 'whether a sportsman has become famous enough to deserve being photographed for the illustrated papers'. Everything in the early pictures was designed to last; not only the incomparable groupings in which the subjects came together – whose disappearance was certainly one of the most accurate symptoms of what was happening in society itself in the second half of the century – even the folds assumed by a garment in these pictures last longer. One has only to look at Schelling's coat*; its immortality, too, rests assured; the shape it assumes upon its wearer is not unworthy of the creases in the latter's face. In short, everything testifies to Bernhard von Brentano's supposition 'that a photographer of 1850 stood at the same level as his instrument' – for the first and for long, the last time.

Further, in order to appreciate the enormous effect of the daguerrotype in the age of its discovery, one must remember that at the time entirely new perspectives were being discovered in open air painting by the most advanced painters. Conscious that it was precisely here that photography should be taking over from painting, Arago, casting a historical glance at the early attempts of Giovanni Battista Porta, explicitly remarks that: 'as far as the effect that depends on the imperfect transparency of our atmosphere is concerned (and which has been characterised by the mistaken term *aerial perspective*), not even practised painters expect the *camera obscura*' (rather, the copying of the pictures produced by it) 'to help them in reproducing the latter with precision'. It was when Daguerre succeeded in fixing the pictures of the camera obscura that the painters were left behind by the technician. However, the real victim of photography was not landscape painting, but the miniature portrait. Things developed so quickly that by 1840 most of the innumerable miniature painters had become professional photographers, at first merely as a sideline, then exclusively so. They were assisted by the experience of their original profession, but they owed their high level of photographic achievement to their technical rather than their artistic training. This transitional generation disappeared very gradually; indeed, a kind of Biblical blessing seemed to rest upon these first photographers: Nadar, Stelzner, Pierson, Bayard all lived to be ninety or a hundred. Finally, however, the ranks of the professional photographer were

* See plate 5, p 13

18 invaded on all sides by businessmen, and when subsequently the practice of touching up the negative became widespread (the bad painter's revenge on photography), a sharp decline in taste set in. This was the period of the thick photograph album. Its favoured location was the most chill part of the house, on pier or pedestal tables in the drawing-room. Leatherbound, embossed with metal mounts, it sported upon its gold-rimmed, fingerthick pages absurdly draped or laced figures – uncle Alex and Aunt Riekchen, Trudchen when she was little, Father in his first term at university – and finally, to crown the shame, ourselves: as drawing-room Tyroleans, yodelling and waving hats against a background of painted snow peaks or as spruce sailors, leaning one leg straight, the other bent, as is proper, against a polished door-jamb. The accessories of such portraits, the pedestals, balustrades and diminutive oval tables still recall the time when, due to the long exposure, the subject required supports in order to remain still. If at the beginning one made do with *headrests* or *kneesupports*, other accessories soon followed, such as were to be found in famous paintings and which therefore had to be *artistic*. At first it was the pillar or curtain.* Already in the sixties the abler men felt moved to protest against this nonsense. So one contemporary English professional journal wrote: 'In painted pictures the pillar had the appearance of possibility, but the manner in which it is used in photography is absurd, for it usually stands on a carpet. There is no one, however, who has to be convinced that marble or stone pillars do not require a carpet as foundation.' It was the time when those studios appeared with draperies and palm-trees, tapestries and easels, looking like a cross between an execution and a representation, between a torture chamber and a throne room, and of which shattering testimony is provided by an early photograph of Kafka. A boy of about six, dressed in a tight-fitting, almost deliberately humiliating child's suit, overladen with lace, is seen standing in a kind of wintergarden landscape. The background teems with palm fronds. And as if to make these upholstered tropics still stickier and sultrier, the subject holds in his left hand an immoderately large hat with a broad brim of the type worn by Spaniards. He would surely disappear into the setting, were it not for his immeasurably sad eyes which dominate the landscape that has been predestined for them.

This picture in its infinite sadness forms a pendant to the early photography where the people did not, as yet, look out at the world in so excluded and godforsaken a manner as this boy. They had an aura about them, a medium which mingled with their manner of looking and gave them a plenitude and security. Once more the technical equivalent for this is very obvious; it consists in an absolute continuum from brightest light to darkest shadow. Here, too, the law whereby new achievements are forecast in an

* See plate 6, p 14

older technique finds confirmation; for the former portrait painting had produced the unique flowering of mezzotint engraving before its decline. The mezzotint engraving depended on a technique of reproduction which was of course only later to link up with the new photographic technique. As on mezzotint engraving plates, so the light in Hill's photography struggles painfully out of darkness. Orlik speaks of the 'coherent direction of light' produced by the long exposure, which gives 'these early photographs their greatness'. And among contemporaries of the invention Delaroche remarked on the 'unprecedented and delightful' general impression 'which in no way disturbs the repose of the masses'. So much for the technical conditioning of the auratic appearance. In particular, many group photographs still retain a sense of animated togetherness on the plate which disappears in the print (*Originalaufnahme*). This delicate articulation was sometimes caught with beauty and depth within the now old-fashioned oval frame. Hence it is wrong to emphasise the *artistic perfection* or *taste* of these incunabula of photography. These pictures were produced in premises where from the outset each customer met in his photographer a technician of the latest school and where the photographer met in every customer a member of a class on the ascendant, replete with an aura which penetrated to the very folds of his bourgeois overcoat or bow-tie. For the mere manufacture of a primitive camera does not in itself constitute an aura. Rather in these early times do object and technique correspond as clearly as they diverge in the succeeding period of decline. Soon an advanced optics would be using instruments capable of overcoming darkness completely and of registering objects with the clarity of a mirror. Nevertheless, the photographers of the post-1880 period saw it as their task to simulate with the aid of all the arts of retouching, especially the so-called rubber print, that aura which had been removed in just the same way from the picture by more powerful cameras, as it had from reality by the increasing degeneration of the imperialist bourgeoisie. Thus, especially in the *Jugendstil*, a shadowy tone, broken by artificial light reflections, became fashionable; yet, despite this twilight, a posturing stance emerged ever more clearly betraying by its blinkerdom the impotence of that generation in the face of technical progress.

And yet the decisive thing about photography is the relationship of the photographer to his technique. Camille Recht catches it by an attractive comparison: 'The violinist', he says, 'has first to create his note, to search for and find it with lightning speed; the pianist strikes the keys and produces a sound. Both painter and photographer use an instrument. The painter's drawing and colouring corresponds to the violinist's forming of his notes; the photographer like the pianist is given an apparatus in advance which is subject to much more restricting laws than those imposed on the violinist. A Paderewski will never earn the fame or exercise the

20 near-legendary magic of a Paganini'. But, to stay with the comparison, there is a Busoni of photography, namely Atget. Both were virtuosi and at the same time forerunners. Unexampled devotion to their work coupled with the greatest precision characterised them both. Atget was an actor who, repelled by his profession, tore off his mask and then sought to strip reality of its camouflage. Poor and unknown, he lived in Paris, selling his photography for a song to amateurs scarcely less eccentric than he. He died recently, leaving behind an *oeuvre* of more than four thousand pictures. Berenice Abbot of New York has collected them together and a selection has now appeared in a very fine volume published by Camille Recht.³ The contemporary journals 'knew nothing of the man who hawked his pictures mainly round the art studios, throwing them away for a few pence, often for no more than the price of one of those picture postcards of around 1900 which show charming views of the city bathed in midnight blue, complete with a touched-up moon. He reached the pole of perfect mastery; but with the embittered mastery of a great craftsman who always lives in the shadows, he neglected to plant his flag there. Hence many others may imagine they have discovered the pole, when Atget had been there before them'. Indeed, Atget's Paris photos are the forerunners of surrealist photography; vanguard of the only really broad column which surrealism was able to set in motion. He was the first to disinfect the stuffy atmosphere spread by the conventional portrait photography of the period of decline. He cleansed this atmosphere, indeed cleared it altogether. He initiated the liberation of the object from the aura, which is the most incontestable achievement of the recent school of photography. When *Bifur* or *Variété*, magazines of the avant-garde, present the merest details under such captions as 'Westminster', 'Lille', 'Antwerp', or 'Breslau' – here a section of balustrade, there a bare treetop with branches crisscrossing over a gaslamp, or a partition-wall, or a candelabra with a safety ring bearing the name of the town – these are merely the literary pointings-up of motifs discovered by Atget. He seeks the forgotten and the forsaken, and hence such pictures are directed against the exotic, ostentatious, romantic sound of city names; they suck the aura out of reality like water from a sinking ship. What is aura? A peculiar web of space and time: the unique manifestation of a distance, however near it may be. To follow, while reclining on a summer's noon, the outline of a mountain range on the horizon or a branch, which casts its shadow on the observer until the moment or the hour partakes of their presence – this is to breathe in the aura of these mountains, of this branch. Today, people have as passionate an inclination to *bring things close* to themselves or even more to the masses, as to overcome uniqueness in every situation by reproducing it. Every day the need grows more urgent to possess an object in the closest proximity, through a picture or, better, a reproduction. And the

reproduction, as the illustrated newspaper and weekly readily prove, distinguishes itself unmistakably from the picture. Uniqueness and permanence are as closely intertwined in the latter as transitoriness and reproducibility in the former. The prizing of the object from its shell, the destruction of its aura is the mark that the sense of the sameness of things in the world has grown to such an extent that by means of reproduction even the unique is made to yield up its uniqueness. Atget always passed by 'the grand views and the so-called landmarks'; what gave him pause would be a huge row of bootlasts or Parisian courtyards full of trucks drawn up in rank and file from evening to morning; or those hundreds of thousands of well-worn tables you see, the dirty dishes left standing; or brothel Rue . . . No 5 where the number five appears in giant letters at four different places on the façade. The remarkable thing about these pictures, however, is their emptiness. The Porte d'Acceuil at the fortifications is empty, so too are the triumphal steps, the courtyards, the café terraces and, as is proper, the Place du Tertre. They are not lonely, but they lack atmosphere; the city in these pictures is empty in the manner of a flat which has not yet found a new occupant. They are the achievements of surrealist photography which presages a salutary estrangement between man and his environment, thus clearing the ground for the politically-trained eye before which all intimacies serve the illumination of detail.*

It is obvious that this new way of seeing is least at home where indulgence was most common: in the remunerative, representative portrait-photograph. On the other hand, photography cannot do without people. And whoever did not know this will have been taught by the best Russian films that even milieu and landscape will only reveal themselves to a photographer who is able to transform their anonymity into a physiognomy. Yet this possibility is very much determined by the subject. It was the generation least intent on having itself photographed for posterity, seeking rather shyly to withdraw into everyday life when faced with such a prospect – like the Schopenhauer of the Frankfurt picture of 1850, digging himself well back into his armchair – which for this very reason succeeded in transmitting its everyday life on to the plate. But this generation did not pass on its virtues. It was only decades later that the feature film gave the Russians the opportunity of placing before the camera people with no interest in being photographed. At the same time the human face assumed new and infinite meaning on the film-plate. But it was no longer a portrait. What was it? A German photographer earned the distinction of having answered this question. August Sander⁴ compiled a series of faces which vies with the magnificent physiognomic gallery opened up by Eisenstein and Pudovkin, and this from a scientific point of view. 'His entire opus is arranged in seven groups, corresponding

* See plate 7, p 15

22 to the existing social order and is to be published in roughly forty-five albums, comprising twelve photographs each'. So far there is a selected volume with sixty reproductions which provide inexhaustible material for study. 'Sander starts with the peasant,* the earth-bound man, and takes the reader through all the strata and occupations, up to on the one hand the highest representatives of civilisation and on the other down to imbeciles'. It was not as a scholar, advised by race theorists or social researchers, that the author undertook his enormous task, but, in the publisher's words, 'as the result of immediate observation'. It is indeed unprejudiced observation, bold and at the same time delicate, very much in the spirit of Goethe's remark: 'There is a delicate form of the empirical which identifies itself so intimately with its object that it thereby becomes theory'. Accordingly it is quite proper that an observer like Döblin should light upon precisely the scientific aspects of this opus and point out: 'Just as there is a comparative anatomy which enables one to understand the nature and history of organs, so here the photographer has produced a comparative photography, thereby gaining a scientific standpoint which places him beyond the photographer of detail.' It would be lamentable if economic circumstances prevented the further publication of this extraordinary corpus. However, there is an even surer way of encouraging the publisher apart from this fundamental reason. Work like Sander's can assume an unsuspected actuality overnight. Shifts in power, to which we are now accustomed, make the training and sharpening of a physiognomic awareness into a vital necessity. Whether one is of the right or the left, one will have to get used to being seen in terms of one's provenance. And in turn, one will see others in this way too. Sander's work is more than a picture-book, it is an atlas of instruction.

'In our age there is no work of art which is regarded with as much attention as a photograph of oneself, one's closest relatives and friends, one's sweetheart', wrote Lichtwark as early as 1907, thereby shifting the investigation from the sphere of aesthetic distinctions to that of social functions. Only from this standpoint can the investigation go forward again. It is indeed characteristic that the debate should have hardened most of all over the question of the aesthetics of *photography as an art*, while for example the so much less questionable social fact of *art as photography* scarcely received a glance. And yet the effect of the photographic reproduction of works of art is of much greater importance for the function of art than whether a photograph is more or less artistic in its composition; for the latter turns into *the exploiting camera (Kamerabeute)*. Indeed, is not the homecoming amateur with his vast number of artistic snaps more contented than the hunter, returning laden with the game which is only of value to the trader. And indeed the time seems not far off when there will be more

* See plate 8, p 16

illustrated papers than game and poultry shops. So much for the *snapshot*. But the accents change completely, if one turns from photography as art to art as photography. Everyone will have observed how much easier it is to get the measure of a picture, especially sculpture, not to mention architecture, in a photograph than in reality. It is indeed tempting to put this down to a decline in appreciation for art, an abdication on the part of the present generation. But that is gainsaid by the fact that the development of reproductive techniques has been more or less paralleled by a change in the appreciation of great works of art. The latter can no longer be seen as the productions of individuals; they have become collective formations of such enormous dimensions that their assimilation is dependent precisely on their diminution. The result of the mechanical methods of reproduction, ultimately, is to have provided a technique of diminution which helps men to a degree of control over works of art without whose aid they could no longer be used.

If anything characterises the relations between art and photography today, it is the unresolved tension introduced between them by the photography of works of art. Many of the photographers who determine the present-day character of this technique began as painters. They turned their back on painting after attempts to relate its means of expression to the life of today in a living and straightforward way. The keener their awareness of the nature of the times, the more problematic did their point of departure become for them. Just as eighty years previously, so now once again photography took over from painting. 'The creative possibilities of the new', remarked Moholy-Nagy, 'are usually discovered slowly in those old forms, old instruments and areas of work which owing to the appearance of the new have, in all essentials, already had their day, but which blossom euphorically under the stimulus of what is happening. Thus, for example, futurist (static) painting produced the clearly-defined problematic of simultaneity of movement, the depiction of a moment in time, which was later to destroy it and this at a time when the film was known, but not yet remotely understood. . . . In the same way one may – with caution – regard some of today's painters, who are working with methods that combine representation with the use of objects (neo-classicists and verists) as precursors of a new optical form of representation which will soon be using only mechanical and technical methods'. And Tristan Tzara, 1922: 'When everything that went by the name of art was seized with paralysis, the photographer lit his thousand-candle lamp and the sensitive paper gradually absorbed the darkness of several objects of common use. He had discovered the potential of a delicate, untouched flash of light which was more important than all the constellations given to our eyes to enjoy'. It is those photographers who have gone over from figurative art to photography, not out of opportunistic con-

24 siderations, not by accident, not for convenience, who today constitute the avant-garde among their colleagues, because their development protects them, to some extent, from the greatest danger facing contemporary photography, namely the influence of artistic professionalism. 'Photography as art', says Sasha Stone, 'is a very dangerous field'.

When photography takes itself out of the contexts established by Sander, Germaine Krull or Blossfeldt and frees itself from physiognomic, political and scientific interests, then it becomes *creative*. The lens now focusses on the *ensemble*; the photographic poseur appears. 'The spirit that has mastered mechanics turns the most exact results into parables of life'. The more all-embracing the crisis of contemporary society, the more that the individual aspects of the latter confront one another in rigid opposition, so the more the creative reveals itself as the merest form of variant, with contradiction for its father and imitation as its mother; the creative has become a fetish whose features owe their life simply to the changing lights of fashion. The creative in photography is the latter's responsiveness to fashion. *The world is beautiful* – that precisely is its motto. Therein is unmasked a photography which is able to relate a tin of canned food to the universe, yet cannot grasp a single one of the human connections in which that tin exists; a photography which even in its most dreamlike compositions is more concerned with eventual saleability than with understanding. Since, however, the true face of this photographic creativity is the advertisement or the association, its legitimate counterpart is exposure or construction. For, says Brecht, the situation, is 'complicated by the fact that less than at any time does a simple *reproduction of reality* tell us anything about reality. A photograph of the Krupp works or GEC yields almost nothing about these institutions. Reality proper has slipped into the functional. The reification of human relationships, the factory, let's say, no longer reveals these relationships. Therefore something has actually to be *constructed*, something artificial, something set up'. It is the achievement of the surrealists to have trained the pioneers of such photographic construction. A further stage in this contest between creative and constructive photography is marked by the Russian film. One cannot underline enough the fact that the great achievements of its directors were only possible in a country where photography started not from stimulus and suggestion, but from experiment and instruction. In this sense, and only in this, one can still derive meaning from the impressive welcome accorded to photography in 1855 by that crude painter of ideas, Antoine Wiertz. 'For some years it has been the glory of our century to have given birth to a machine which daily astonishes the mind and startles the eyes. Before another century is out, this machine will be the brush, palette, colours, skill, experience, patience, dexterity, accuracy, tonality, varnish, model, realisation, the extract of paint-

ing. . . . One should not think that the daguerrotype will kill art. . . . When the daguerrotype, this giant-child has grown up, when all his skill and power has unfolded, then genius will suddenly seize him by the scruff of the neck and cry in a loud voice: Come here! Now you belong to me. We shall work together'. How sober, indeed pessimistic by contrast are the following words with which Baudelaire announced the new technique to his readers two years later in the *Salon of 1875*. Like those just quoted, they cannot be read today without a slight change of emphasis. But, by taking the opposite point of view, they retain their good sense as the most trenchant defence against all the usurpations of artistic photography. 'In these unfortunate days a new industry has appeared which has contributed not a little to confirming shallow stupidity in its belief . . . that art is and can be nothing other than the accurate reproduction of nature. . . . A vengeful god hearkened to the voice of this throng. Daguerre became its Messiah'. And again: 'If photography is allowed to complement art in some of its functions, the latter will soon be ousted and ruined by it, thanks to the natural confederacy which will have grown up between photography and the crowd. Therefore photography must return to its proper duty which consists in being a servant to the sciences and the arts'.

One thing, however, neither Wiertz nor Baudelaire grasped and that is the possibilities which lie in the very authenticity of photography. This authenticity cannot forever be circumvented by the reportage of cliché which forms only verbal associations in the reader. The camera becomes smaller and smaller, ever readier to capture transitory and secret pictures which are able to shock the associative mechanism of the observer to a standstill. At this point the caption must step in, thereby creating a photography which literarises the relationships of life and without which photographic construction would remain stuck in the approximate. Not for nothing have Atget's photographs been compared with those of a scene of action. But is not every corner of our cities a scene of action? Is not each passerby an actor? Is it not the task of the photographer – descendant of the augurs and the haruspices – to uncover guilt and name the guilty in his pictures? 'The illiterate of the future', it has been said, 'will not be the man who cannot read the alphabet, but the one who cannot take a photograph'. But must we not also count as illiterate the photographer who cannot read his own pictures? Will not the caption become the most important component of the shot? Such are the questions released by the historical tensions of the ninety years' distance which separates us from the daguerrotype. It is in the irradiation of these sparks that the first photographs stand forth with such unapproachable beauty from out of the darkness of our grandfathers' days.

1. Helmuth Th. Bossert and Heinrich Guttman, *Aus der Frühzeit der Photographie 1840-1870. A Picture Volume Reproducing 200 Originals*. Frankfurt a. M., 1930.
Heinrich Schwarz, *David Octavius Hill, der Meister der Photographie*. With 80 plates. Leipzig, 1931.
2. Karl Blossfeldt, *Urformen der Kunst. Photographic Pictures of Plants*. Published with an Introduction by Karl Nierendorf. 120 plates. Berlin, 1931.
3. Atget *Lichtbilder*. Published by Camille Recht. Paris and Leipzig, 1931.
4. August Sander, *Das Antlitz der Zeit*. Berlin, 1930.

Translated by Stanley Mitchell

monogram

Forthcoming issue (No. 4)

- * Melodrama
Douglas Sirk Leo McCarey
Ford in the '30s D. W. Griffith
- * The Decline of Great Families
- * The Structure of the Hollywood movie
- * Film reviews: Kubrick, Pakula, Bunuel

British Cinema (No. 3)

- * The decade 1960-70
Losey, Lean, Loach, Schlesinger, Russell, Boorman, Platts-Mills
- * Interview with Michael Powell

European Cinema (No. 2)

- * In Defense of the Narrative Cinema
Rivette, Rossellini, Bertolucci

Hollywood (No. 1)

- * Why Hollywood
- * Eisenstein and Style

Subscriptions

- * for four issues £1.00 (UK) £1.20 (Europe)
\$4.00 (USA/Canada) postage included

Monogram, 63 Old Compton Street, London W1.

Andrew Tudor

There is a famous and cryptic comment attributed to the late Virginia Woolf. On hearing the suggestion that art ought to reflect the real world she replied that one of the damn things was enough already! Three quarters of the way through the twentieth century we could be forgiven for assuming that general aesthetics is largely in agreement with her. The old debates over realist art have either disappeared or taken new and substantially altered forms. It is difficult to even imagine the vigour with which they were once conducted. The label 'realism' might still be invoked to suggest a specific historical movement, but in most arts it no longer carries the once enormous weight of aesthetic approval. If the idea of art reflecting reality is invoked at all it is more likely to be expressed in terms of an underlying truth revealed by art, than as the source, inspiration, and outer limit of artistic endeavour. This is hardly surprising. It seems to be in the intellectual temper of the times to seek below mere 'surface reality' for the hidden truth beneath. Whether there is in fact such a single truth is a question easily brushed to one side. In aesthetics and elsewhere it is the faith that counts.

The oddity is that in aesthetic discussion of the two most twentieth century of arts – cinema and television – the older terms persist. 'Realism' is still quite close to the surface. Television is not so problematic. There is barely a history of television reviewing let alone full fledged television criticism. There is still time here. But in film aesthetics realism has always carried strong overtones. Successive generations of critics, whatever their differences, have had to come to terms with some variation on the theme. And why? Usually to load their own special interpretations onto the already creaking cart. The label 'realism' has always claimed some value in and of itself, whatever its specific operational definition, however it is said to be recognised. Where previous centuries were happy to claim art as desirable insofar as it was godly, though the signs of godliness might differ enormously, the last hundred years have frequently done the same with 'realism'. Replace one unknowable god with another.

The practical variability of the concept is easily recognised. It is a roomy catch-all. Simply begin to think of the wide range of movies which have been approved in the name of realism. An almost random list would have to include: *Train Entering a Station*, *Birth of a Nation*, *Battleship Potemkin*, *Earth*, *Berlin*, *The Covered Wagon*, *Nosferatu*, *Sunrise*, *M*, *Scarface*, *I Was a Fugitive from a Chain Gang*, *The Plow that Broke the Plains*, *Nanook of the North*, *The Good Earth*, *Mrs Miniver*, *Citizen Kane*,

28 *Housing Problems, Night Mail, Diary for Timothy, La Règle du Jeu, La Terra Trama, Paisa, Los Olvidados, Louisiana Story*, and much of the rest of the history of the cinema. A moment's reflection is quite enough to recognise that the resemblances of these films are no more than superficial. We might commonly link them in our minds simply because we have become so used to the idea. As in psychology's labelling theory the meaning given to the object derives from the label we attach; the label is not rendered meaningful by the intrinsic characteristics of the object.

In effect, then, 'realism' is a label which many generations of critics have used as a *de facto* substitute for 'highly valued'. Like many similarly relativistic terms it can be easily employed as an argument-topping justification. If all parties implicitly agree on its value, then to invoke the god is to arrest the dangerous slide into regress. 'Why do you like this?' 'Because x'. 'Why?' 'Because y'. 'Why?' 'Because it's *realistic*'. The 'why?' comes a little more difficult after that. Though it is notoriously difficult to pin down the meaning of 'realism', only its positive connotations are required for its usefulness in aesthetic dispute. It is indeed unknowable but all powerful!

For the moment, though, it is the ambiguity of meaning which interests me here. Jakobson's essay 'On Artistic Realism' develops a formal analysis of this ambiguity.¹ He distinguishes two sorts of variation in the meaning given to 'realism'. There is the realism claimed by virtue of the artists intentions *or* the audiences perceptions. And there is the realism which is conservative (we are preserving realism in the face of attack) and revolutionary (our new approach is more realistic than the old). That is, the meaning given to 'realism' is relativistic viz-à-viz the source of the claim (artist, audience) and the historical context in relation to other claims (revolutionary, conservative). The former, at least, is a pertinent distinction to which we shall return, though the latter may well be of a different order.

It should be repeated that the analysis is formal. One could easily substitute 'godliness' for 'realism'; the structured ambiguities would remain the same. So although such an approach could help us understand how the ambiguity of the term is put to use it cannot tell us why 'realism' specifically has come to be such an important category in film aesthetics. Certainly ambiguity has its uses, but there are plenty of equally ambiguous alternatives. Why and how realism? What are the factors which have generated the particular ambiguities of the term in film aesthetics? What compendium of ideas historically formed the multi-faceted term which we now have? Of course the full answer to such questions would need to be historical and sociological. Historical in that we would have to single out the many elements in the history of film aesthetics which have combined and cross-fertilised into our contemporary 'loading' of the term. Sociological in that we would

have to understand the social dynamics of the processes whereby these ideas were in fact combined and overlaid. Needless to say such a task is far too massive for this brief space. But short of such enormity it is possible to erect one or two signposts pointing to the factors we would need to include. Some are historical events in the cinema itself, and inevitably the characteristic reactions to them. Others are elaborate and much discussed aesthetic positions. Their combination – the form of which I would not pretend to understand – is the source of the particular ambiguities in our use of ‘realism’.

There seem to me to be half-a-dozen such areas worth initial singling out. Least confusing, though most confused, is the elaborate aesthetic tradition best expressed in some aspects of the work of Kracauer and Bazin, and occasionally in the essays of John Grierson. Less well understood and important in fairly simplistic versions are those ideas deriving from Soviet cinema and Soviet culture in the twenties. And parallel to this, concurrent developments in the German cinema offer certain devious inputs into our concept of realism, even if only negatively. Arising out of both these clusters of film styles we find another contribution from Andre Bazin. Specifically, his influential discussion of ‘spatial realism’. And, of course, given much prominence in his work is that third of the historic film ‘movements’: Italian neo-realism. The theme Bazin seems to derive from here is a form of naturalism which also finds a more romantic expression in the documentary work of Robert Flaherty. Finally, and most important in the English context, the ‘purposive cinema’ of John Grierson’s documentary tradition adds icing to the cake.

The best point of departure seems to be the Kracauer/Bazin view of aesthetic realism. The root argument is very simple. It depends for its cogency on an analysis of the nature of photography. In the opening sections of Kracauer’s *Theory of Film* and in Bazin’s essay on ‘The Ontology of the Photographic Image’ it is put fairly bluntly. Although Bazin’s version becomes more elaborate, the effective kernel of the argument is that the essence of film is photography, photography’s principle characteristic is that it impassively reveals the world, and so film will fulfil its true nature by doing likewise. There are endless traps and blind-alleys in this argument but for the moment it will be sufficient to single out only three.²

(a) One man’s ‘essence’ is another’s poison. To justify realism by reference to ‘essences’ is simply to push the subjective assessment one step back and so claim it as being independent of personal response. Instead of ‘This film is good because I respond to it in x, y, z ways’ we have ‘This film is good because it fulfils the natural essence of the medium’. Which is only another way of saying ‘This film is good because it lives up to my image of the essence of the medium and so I respond favourably to it’.

30 The argument simply translates a statement of aesthetic preference into the language of 'essences' so lending the assessment some spurious and borrowed legitimacy. An art cannot be isolated from its audience. It can have no pure, independent, eternal essence.

(b) Photography cannot possibly be said to *impassively reveal the world*. This would require that there was no human interference in the process whatsoever, none of what Kracauer has called the 'formative influence'. Since this is a self-evident impossibility – the very existence of the camera is human interference to say nothing of exposure, shutter speed, focus and the like – this could hardly be an 'essence' even accepting the general essences argument.

(c) Buried in the position is an absolutist conception of realism. There is only one 'realism'; it is an absolute standard. But as Jakobson's discussion demonstrates the concept is certain to contain ambiguities and to be relativistic. Quite how ambiguous is apparent in Kracauer's desperate contortions:

Now there are different visible worlds. Take a stage performance or a painting; they too are real and can be perceived. But the only reality we are concerned with is actually existing physical reality – the transitory world we live in. (Physical reality will also be called 'material reality' or 'physical existence', or 'actuality', or loosely just 'nature'. Another fitting term might be 'camera reality'. Finally the term 'life' suggests itself as an alternative expression . . .).³

The passage speaks for itself. It reflects a truly remarkable need to elevate the idea of realism to the position of ultimate aesthetic arbiter, a position which Pauline Kael once suggested fell in the 'great lunatic tradition'. Namely, that body of thinkers who believe in the possibility of an objective basis for assessing aesthetic value. It is for this reason that this use of realism tries to create an independently established natural essence of the art. The argument seems both ill-advised and casuistic.

Although it has obvious failings, the 'essence of film' argument is not uncommon. The belief that film has a natural affinity for realist subjects has had continuous currency, and almost any standard text makes some obeisance in that direction. The Kracauer/Bazin treatment is merely the most explicit and so most easily discussed statement of it. But long before this somewhat metaphysical variant was to emerge, the post-revolution Soviet artists and theorists were caught up in their own version. Their discussion was wide-ranging and frequently elliptical. The translations from *Lef* in *Winter Screen* v 12 n 4 give some idea. However, the Soviet contribution to the realist strain in general film aesthetics came more from their cinematic practice than from their explicit debates. Although they themselves saw the process in terms of a unity of theory and practice, most of the rest of the

world would seem to have noted the practice to the exclusion of the theory. Only the much quoted theory of montage, torn from its context, was given specific attention. The basic Soviet input to the growth of the realism concept was through the superficial appearance of their films and some aspects of Eisenstein's theories.

Out of these sources come contradictory things. Relative to the larger cinematic context Soviet film clearly *appeared* realistic. It was claimed to present 'real' people in 'real life' events and situations. But this was an image of social realism plus a patina of surface realities. Many of the films were carefully structured to 'distort' the 'reality' either within the image (the stone lion in *Potemkin*, the peacock in *October*), through caricature (the bourgeoisie in *Strike*), and through comic-book distillations of heroism (the unstoppable worker-hero in *Arsenal*). Of the best known Soviet film-makers only Vertov and his kino-eye really departed from the general pattern. And he is now safely tucked away in a by-way of film history. It is Eisenstein's theories which demonstrates the sort of meaning attached to realism in this context. He was concerned to create as strong an effect as possible in his audience, and to do so by employing the full range of montage techniques in the service of 'pathos', of the 'pathetic' film. The 'realism' lay in the claim that the ideological position communicated through this intense emotional experience was a 'correct' analysis of the social situation. Films were non-realist insofar as they presented distortions of the true, underlying state of affairs, as did, for instance, the capitalist cinema. Realism lay in true consciousness; non-realism in false consciousness. The truly 'realist' cinema would be that which most convincingly communicated the world-view in question.

It is clear, then, how a film-maker like Eisenstein comes to be in conflict with orthodox Stalinist 'socialist realism'. This latter reduces the Soviet cinema to pedestrian 'scenes from Soviet life'. Eisenstein did not believe that such a surface realism would convince or convert anyone. The audience must be gripped in an iron fist and shown how to see the real thing; through their emotions and so to their intellect. His intended cinema of pathos is the justification for all the special techniques, the elaborations of form. And the pathos is designed to provide a 'realistic' view in the sense of causing people to recognise the underlying reality of exploitation, class, and revolution. It is almost as if Eisenstein wished for a cinematic equivalent to the process of revealing realities in Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire*.

From the Russian context, then, we see realism as both a 'realism of appearances' and as revealer of the hidden realities of the social situation. Both elements are still present in the overtones of the term, although 'realism of appearances' has generally dominated. It certainly has in the sorts of simple contracts which are traditionally drawn between the Soviet and German cases. So-

32 called German Expressionist cinema has been often employed as an image against which Soviet realism might be defined. The distorted sets, the jagged lighting, the painted shadows, and the heavily stylised acting would make almost anything else look like surface realism. In fact the German case is an excellent example of Jakobson's point about revolutionary and conservative use of 'realism'. The German film has been attacked as destroying the fabric of the real world, a real world which other and preferred artists were trying to preserve against such attack. And yet the expressionist doctrine also wished to lay claim to the term 'realism.' By the process of visually abstracting the object from its context the expressionists claimed to lay bare true reality. Of course it is arguable that none of the films did in fact live up to the expressionist ideal, including the ill-fated *Cabinet of Dr Caligari*.⁴ Nevertheless, the expressionists did make the claim to yet another variation on realism.

The argument is very similar to that implicit in Eisenstein's position. Through particular techniques we can cause the audience to recognise our revealed version of 'true reality'. In Eisenstein's case through montage; in the Expressionist case through the process they called abstraction. It is this similarity, along with the tendency of both to fragment the total image, which has led to the term 'Expressive Realism' in relation to the Soviet case. But there is of course one key difference. Where the Soviet film used largely naturalistic imagery – one recognises the faces and situations as somehow 'true to life' – the extremities of German film were explicitly anti-naturalistic. At this level of the image German expressionism has provided a widely accepted ready made measure of non-realism.

It was André Bazin who pursued this question further than the orthodox treatments of surface naturalism. In the forties and early fifties he wrote extensively on what we might call 'spatial realism'. This can best be understood in contrast to both Soviet Realism and German Expressionism. Both these cinemas were claimed to have committed the mortal aesthetic sin of destroying our normal sense of space within the art. In the German example Bazin was fond of quoting the distorted sets of *Caligari* and the enormous concrete trees of Lang's *Die Nibelungen*. Such distortions were claimed to deny the fundamentals of our normal appreciation of spatial relations. Similarly with montage. The Soviet editing techniques fragmented whatever materials were present before the camera. Hence, once again, natural space was disrupted. The important terms in all this is 'natural'. Bazin clearly believed that there was a given, single spatial sense; if art denied it then the art was unnatural and so bad. Like the general realist argument which we have discussed this view is absolutist. It assumes transcendent standards unaffected by context. The techniques which lived up to the 'natural' standards were especially those involving

deep-focus photography. Welles' *Citizen Kane* and Wyler's *Mrs Miniver* and *The Best Years of Our Lives* are the standard examples.

33

It is not entirely clear why this spatial disruption was to be considered undesirable and so labelled less 'realistic'. The claim that it was anti-natural (even if true) leads nowhere by itself. Some of Bazin's specific discussions suggest that he feels fragmentation and distortion are bad in that they make things less plausible to the audience. For instance, he uses a scene out of *Where No Vultures Fly* as an example of unconvincing fragmentation. It is a standard case. A lion stalking a child who is trying to get back to her family. We never see lion and child in a shot together, and the audience is not convinced because they are aware that the lion was never even there other than on film. It was simply cut in. Leaving aside the question that people clearly *do* accept scenes created this way as plausible, the crucial thing is that the argument is now cast in terms of audience plausibility. The question becomes: which conventions are audiences willing to accept? And of course such conventions can hardly be absolute. They can vary and have varied from time to time and place to place. What may seem unreal (read implausible) to us now could have been highly plausible to some other audience.

This relativistic conception of 'realism' is to be contrasted with the more absolutist strains in Bazin's position, especially his more romantic naturalism. It was this latter which led to his admiration for Italian neo-realism; to the position generally associated with Rossellini, that art should not 'play with nature' but take it as it is. It is Rossellini who is always said to have rebuked his cameraman for shifting a white rock out of a field of black rocks in which they were shooting. What business had he to interfere with nature? Now there are obvious difficulties in uniting Bazin's two realisms. They correspond to Jakobson's ambiguities. But what the artist sees as true to nature may not be plausible to the audience, and what the audience sees as plausible may not be seen by the artist as true to nature. Bazin himself hoped for a unison of his two realisms in the late flowerings of neo-realism. *La Terra Trema* he saw as such a beginning. But his hope seems more pious than probable. There seems no reason to assume that we should be able to unite the various elements of 'realism' into one absolute aesthetic. The difficulties are structured into the discussion; they cannot be avoided by *ex cathedra* fiat.

Italian neo-realism of course had other champions besides Bazin who came to it from other directions. Their views of realism had been formed in other areas of the realist tradition, a tradition which was by now getting more and more confused. In particular, the romantic realism of the documentaries of Robert Flaherty and the more pragmatic English developments inspired by John Grierson combine into the modern ideas of 'documentary realism'. The

34 ideas now become totally tangled. Flaherty's realism for example is always ideologically informed by the conviction that it is man's nobility faced with the inhospitable elements which is the basic reality of the world. Where this can be deeply moving (as in the last scenes of *Nanook*) it can also approach the sentimentally unreal (as in parts of *Man of Aran*). Plausibility is lacking whatever the faithfulness of the images to the 'real' world. Similarly, Grierson's documentary tradition is moulded by his desire for a purposive socially responsible cinema. This is the realism of 'ordinary people' in the pursuit of their everyday lives.

As I have said it is not entirely clear in what way all these elements combine together. It is notable that the three most famous cinematic 'movements' (Germany and Russia in the twenties; Italy in the post-war years) have been deeply implicated in the development. And it is clear that the potentialities for realism which people (artists and audiences) ascribe to the film camera can stretch as far as rendering the implausible plausible. And it is very clear that first of Jakobson's distinctions (between artist and audience conceptions of realism) is a factor which runs right through the confusions in discussions of realist cinema. What is frequently called 'naturalism' reflects that idea of realism which is based on the artist's concept of the relation of his art to the *physical* surface of the world. If we (the audience) believe in 'naturalism' then we are likely to find a 'naturalist' seeming movie plausible. It matters little whether this audience conception coincides with that advanced by the artist. It is even conceivable, if unlikely, that the whole world could agree on what constitutes 'realism' in the cinema. That would merely produce an identical and boring response to the 'realism' of any given film.

In other words what is important is not what can be claimed as a realistic representation, but what *appears* as real: plausibility. We have conventional ideas of what 'real' looks like just as we have conventional ideas about what sort of actions are appropriate in what sorts of film contexts. It would not do for a character in a Western to behave after the manner of a character in a Busby Berkley musical. All the discussions of realism in film aesthetics, all the claims of film-makers to be making realist films, all these have contributed to forming our notions of the 'real' in film. Sometimes directly; sometimes indirectly. But we shall never understand the working of the conventional image of 'realism' as long as we go on looking for some absolute aesthetic standard. Art speaks a *langue* and one aspect of that language is the weight often given to diffuse labels like realism. This is part of the way in which the medium works. When we understand the language then we will know the many meanings of 'realism' and its many consequences. Certainly the camera reproduces what is put in front of it. That is the material on which the art must build. But the art itself is different to that process of reproduction, and it is

the art we want to understand. Bunuel's criticism of neo-realism is apt: 35

Neo-realist reality is incomplete, official, and altogether reasonable; but the poetry, the mystery, everything which completes and enlarges tangible reality is completely missing from its work.

Notes

1. In T. Todorov (ed), *Théorie de la Littérature*, 1921.
2. Such a short discussion is unjust to Kracauer and Bazin, especially the latter. However, I have given them much more extensive consideration in a book *Theories of Film* to be published in the *Cinema One* series this year. Those who feel I am being unfair should look at the longer account!
3. Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film*, 1965, pp 28-29.
4. This question was discussed in some detail in 'Elective Affinities: 'The Myth of German Expressionism' in *Screen* - v 12 n 3, Summer 1971.

C.S.E. EXAMINATIONS IN FILM

by Roger Watkins

A survey of existing C.S.E. film syllabuses which comments on the possibilities offered by the C.S.E., and suggests some other approaches. A useful guide for teachers who may be planning C.S.E. film courses.

Cost: 15p per copy (incl. post.).

To: S.E.F.T. 63 Old Compton Street, London W.1

Please send me copies of **C.S.E. EXAMINATIONS IN FILM.**

I enclose my cheque/P.O. for

Name

Address

.....

SEFT SUMMER SCHOOL 1972

July 25 — August 5

'Television and Education'

The SEFT Summer School will centre on a detailed analysis of the forms and organisation of television. The school will have three areas of study . . .

- television news documentary
- practical work with Closed Circuit Television
- an exploration of methods of teaching television studies in schools and colleges

The Summer School will be held at *Stockwell College of Education* at Bromley in Kent. The College is just 15 minutes from Victoria Station in London. It has individual study bedrooms and double rooms for couples. The College is well-equipped with a CCTV system of 3 cameras, 2 one inch Ampex VTR, an Akai quarter inch portable unit and full studio facilities.

The Summer School will be conducted by 3 resident lecturers:

DAVID BERRY Stockwell College

EDWARD BUSCOMBE Isleworth Polytechnic

RICHARD COLLINS Central London Polytechnic

Guest lecturers will include STUART HOOD, KEN LOACH, PHILIP WHITEHEAD, MP, and NICHOLAS GARNHAM.

Tuition and room and board will cost £40 for the 12 days (£38 for SEFT members). Special rates are available for non-resident students though residential students will be given booking priority.

Applications to SEFT, 63 Old Compton Street, London W1. There is a £5 deposit fee returnable up to June 26.

I wish to attend the SEFT Summer School 1972 on 'Television and Education'.
I enclose my cheque for £5 as a deposit.

Name

Address

.....

Paul Willemen

In his essay 'On Artistic Realism' written as long ago as 1921,¹ Roman Jakobson makes a brilliant attempt to disentangle the confusion which had at that time rendered even the very use of the term realism meaningless. Even though his writing has suffered the fate of that of most of the Russian formalists remaining inaccessible in the West until the 1960's, his critique is nevertheless just as relevant now as it was in 1921. Jakobson begins by defining the term realism as 'an artistic trend which aims to reproduce reality as faithfully as possible and which aspires to achieve the maximum of verisimilitude'. He goes on to distinguish several possible uses of the term:

- (a) Realism as a tendency or aspiration: that is, a work is called realist when the author presents it to us as 'a truthful depiction of reality'.
- (b) Realism as a subjective value-judgment made by the reader/viewer: that is, a work is 'realist' when the person judging it considers it to be 'a truthful depiction of reality'.
- (c) Realism as a literary movement in the nineteenth century: literary historians had elevated the general characteristics of this movement into a general yardstick.

Any change in the dominant tradition, any move 'closer to reality' can only be achieved by rejecting the essential features of the previous tradition. One can, however, be a conservative and reject the 'new' tradition by claiming that its practitioners dwell on the inessential. In this way meanings (a) and (b) must be further split into two subsections, according to a conservative or progressive interpretation given to the term. Jakobson also goes on to isolate certain procedures which occur in the nineteenth century literary texts described as realist but which can also be found in other traditions, such as the inclusion of 'superfluous' details,² details which are not functionally necessary in the narrative. These procedures can also be taken as guarantees of realism.

For a further examination of the term verisimilitude, we must turn to the special issue of the French journal *Communications*,³ devoted exclusively to this subject. It appears that the meaning of the term was first established in classical antiquity by Aristotle, and was later modified in the 17th century, mainly by French aestheticians. Aristotle defined verisimilitude as being the totality of what is accepted as possible according to 'l'opinion commune', ie 'general discourse'. In the 17th century French classicism redefined or, rather added, a dimension to the concept by claiming

38 that a discourse achieved 'truth' by conforming to the rules of an established genre. These rules either had been deduced from already existing works, or what in fact comes down to the same thing, had been imposed by the established *Ars Poetica* (the rules of poetry). It is clear that the term verisimilitude is in fact determined by restrictions within a particular culture and is achieved by obeying existing artistic conventions which are no more than the result of an 'arbitrary and alienating restriction of the possible' (cf Metz).⁴

The 'possible' here refers to what is thought to be possible in the real world.⁵ Verisimilitude on the other hand can only be a quality of art ie its locus is that of the 'fictional world' signified in an art product. Aestheticians use the term *diegesis* for designating this fictional world. In the cinema the factor which mediates between the 'real' world and the diegesis is the pro-filmic event (what happens in front of the camera). In the strict sense reality has to become a pro-filmic event before a fiction can be established. The film-maker has two ways of acting upon what happens in front of his camera: (i) by organising physical events (eg staging, *mettre-en-scene*); (ii) through the use of cinematic language (ie the unique combination of codes which determines the specificity of the cinema).⁶

The term realism applies to a mode of description/depiction, and therefore indicates a relation between two objects; what is being depicted and the result of the depiction. In other words, realism indicates a relation between a primary object (eg the referent in the real world) – and a secondary object in the fictional world (imitation, copy, representation).⁷

Keeping in mind the distinction made by Jakobson, it is possible to define the relation of realism in film in a number of ways. For the purposes of this article only two of these possible relations will be examined in detail.

(I) *Diegesis and Referent*

In the original Aristotelian concept of verisimilitude a fiction is experienced or presented as being realist when it conforms to the generally accepted reading of reality. In other words, it is assumed that the form of the content of the artistic discourse coincides with the form of the content of the general discourse ie of ideology.⁸ As Jakobson points out about painting: 'it is the tradition and the convention of pictorial presentation which, to a large degree, determines the act of visual perception itself'. In this connection, Jean-Louis Comolli's account of the invention of the moving picture in *Cahiers du Cinema*⁹ is extremely relevant and fully supports this view. He maintains that the cinema, in its earliest stages, was developed as a means of *accurately reproducing reality*. This means, in fact, that an attempt was being made by the inventors of the cinema to impose the visual codes in the cinema with which they had learned to perceive reality in the real

world. However, the amazement and wonder elicited by the 'uncanny realism' of these early movies was short-lived and the conservative interpretation of realism was soon under attack by film makers and businessmen. Realism as presented had become a cliché. Jakobson notes this phenomenon in literature when he says of 'progressive' realism: 'The words we used in fiction yesterday have today lost their expressive power. We characterise the object by features which yesterday we considered the least characteristic. . . .' In part due to this reaction, the staging of dramatic plays began to take precedence over newsworthy events.¹⁰ 'Progressive' elements within the film industry started to use painted backcloths, studios, actors, etc, thus destroying the old conventions of realism. The justification given for such deviance from the older conventions was that film-makers needed these extra facilities in order to increase the realism in their work. This manipulation of reality was reinforced in the name of greater realism by action on the pro-filmic event: camera movement, editing, lighting, ie by the use of cinematic codes.¹¹

The 'progressive' interpretations of realism – the manipulation of things by the intrusion of cinematic codes – became associated with an ideological struggle.

The technical apparatus of the cinema had been designed to function according to the perceptual codes of the nineteenth century – the moment of 'realism' in literature. The 'reality-effect' now demanded in the cinema by progressive film makers was seen to be a tool reinforcing or altering existing ideology ie the conventional realism. In the Soviet Union film theory and film-making experiments with cinematic codes during the 1920's served to find ways of establishing and propagating a 'new reality'. In the USA film-makers were largely concerned with conforming to the demands of the box office.¹² This second response leads us to define a second possible relation of 'realism' which historically followed the first relation.

(II) *Diegesis A and Diegesis B*

When certain films proved to be popular, and therefore remunerative, more products were manufactured as *like* the original as possible. This marked the first 'ossification' – the development of genres, and formulae within the genres. Film-makers strove to achieve a similarity between the 'model' and their product – ie a relation of 'realism' between the forms of expression (the continuous flowing narrative) as well as between the forms of content (standard themes in the Western). The image of the star was only one more formula for success, and great pains were taken to make this image conform to its model (usually the first major box-office success of the star in question).¹³

The cinema in Germany and in the Soviet Union was, however, in both cases a violent reaction against these nineteenth century

40 codes of perception. In Russia this reaction was supported and institutionalised by the Bolshevik Revolution; in Germany it took the form of a revival of a Romantic aesthetics.

The 'new realism' of these progressive film-makers can be located in the search towards a new relation between forms of expression (style and 'look') and the forms of content (subjects and themes). Since the specific forms of content are structured in part out of the substance of content (the prevailing social and political ideology) the new relation which these film makers strived for was both an artistic and ideological move.

The forms of expression became the primary concern of the progressive film-maker. He became aware of the fact that the existing forms of expression had been created in an attempt to answer ideological needs to which he no longer subscribed. The language, therefore had to be changed in order to express a new content. Film makers were less concerned with film as a representation of the real world, which was its referent, than they were with those processes of production which mediated and linked the two eg the question of professional versus non professional, rehearsal versus improvisation. (See texts from *Lef* and *New Lef*, *Winter Screen* v 12 n 4.) The mediation itself was stressed. The nature of the pro-filmic event was put under scrutiny as were the ways of acting upon it.

In capitalist countries, especially in the United States, there was a contradiction between the maintenance of genre resemblance and connected efforts to bridge the gap between the real world and film. If a film was true and real because it was like other films of the same type, within the genre, and therefore realistic, a risk was run of genre verisimilitude becoming a cliché, simply an outworn formula.

The only possible way out of the dilemma was greater technical advance, essentially a re-vamping of the old, making the old bigger, better, brighter, in short more perfect. This technical perfection was applauded as an increase in realism. But the contradictions still remained in the quest both for genre verisimilitude and for greater realism. In the case of the gangster movie, genre verisimilitude prevailed – the test of realism was the relation of this year's film to last year's. In the case of the Western, the need for greater realism gave birth to the 'psychological Western' ie unlike the *formula* Western, this was adult and conformed to assumptions of motivations in actual life.

In the days of the silent film a melodramatic depiction of low life and crime was introduced into the then extremely formalised and glamorous Hollywood product, precisely to increase the realism. The success of certain elements in these films 'with added realism' led to an extremely rigorously codified genre: the gangster film as we know it. As long as the substance and the form of the content are forced to remain unchanged, due to commercial

political or ideological censorship, the fact of 'intervention', of mediation will in some way have to be obfuscated, either by attempts to deny that the pro-filmic event has been 'arranged' in a way which does not conform to reality (even the makers of films in the *fantastique* genre always insist that they are 'realistic'), or by a straightforward assertion that the pro-filmic event has been dispensed with altogether and that 'reality' is being filmed 'directly'. This last attitude denies that the second way of acting upon the pro-filmic event (ie through the application of cinematic codes) is an intervention at all, in spite of the evidence that the very apparatus film makers employ, enshrines an inbuilt ideology. The various forms of British Realism, whether they be Documentary or Free Cinema, commit this mystification.

The refusal to acknowledge that we cannot possibly succeed in counteracting this inbuilt bias of the cinema unless we do away with all those ideological notions of the screen being a 'window onto reality', has resulted in the various fairly marginal attempts to increase the quality of 'realism' by exploring other possible relations between stages of the film making process, such as the one between one pro-filmic event and another. This kind of endeavour would account for the difference in realism – according to some critics and film makers – between films such as *Lion's Love* and *Two Weeks in Another Town*. In *Lion's Love* we see – if we are to believe Agnes Varda – a complex relationship between fiction and reality, while Minnelli's film would be only a shadow of a shadow compared to the 'true' document of Varda. The confusion between these two definitions of verisimilitude has resulted in attempts to reproduce the dominant ideology more faithfully, eg by altering the relation between the form of expression and the substance of the content (ie the ideology). This was the case when colour, sound, cinemascope, deep-focus, etc . . . were hailed as major advances, because each of these techniques was supposed automatically to reveal more 'reality'. Significantly, the arguments put forward to substantiate the enthusiasm for these technological advances were, and, to a large extent, still are that the 'world we live in' possesses both colour and sound. Only on very rare occasions have these procedures been justified on the grounds that they represent a significant addition to the cinematic codes and consequently an increase in the complexity of the filmic discourse. The struggle against the advent of sound and of cinemascope and to a lesser degree against colour, is also a striking example of Jakobson's distinction between 'progressive' and 'conservative' realism.

Concluding hypothesis

As the relevant activity in literature is the act of writing, so in film, it is the 'acting upon the pro-filmic world' ie filming. As has been pointed out, this occurs in two stages (in fact, there are

42 three stages, but for the sake of simplicity, laboratory processing and the possibility it offers for bringing about additional changes in the film, is included in stage 2:

Stage 1 – The assembly of a series of objects in front of the camera, or, alternatively, the locating of a place where the series of objects required can be found.

Stage 2 – The application of cinematic codes onto these objects, transforming them into a filmic discourse.

The act of filming can therefore be described using Barthes' definition, as a 'structural activity';¹⁴ it disjoins and reassembles an object or a series of objects in order to obtain an arrangement between the terms which produces a clearly readable meaning which it did not necessarily possess prior to the operation. If we consider that gesture, furniture, food, dress, can function as sign systems¹⁵ when they are severed from their utilitarian aspects, then it must be admitted that in film, all these sign systems become immediately and functionally significant. When a meal is served in a film, it is never served to be eaten by the addressee of the sign – ie the viewer – but it must always, at the very least, signify a situation. If in the diegesis someone eats this meal, then the act of eating this food, in addition, becomes a sign addressed to the viewer. It must be kept in mind that all elements on the screen are there because a person (or group of people) made the conscious (or unconscious) decision to place them or leave them there. The objects or series of objects which are thus disjoined and reassembled are therefore primarily the sign systems of the 'natural world'. They become in Metz's terminology¹⁶ elements which are '*filmique-non-cinématographique*' in that they are found in films, but are not specifically cinematic. These sign systems could occur in everyday life, where they form a discourse to be read by everyone.¹⁷ The film-maker, assisted by the prop-man, set-designer, art director, etc, isolates usually not single elements, but whole phrases, related sequences of sign events and uses them in his film. It is this reassembly which must necessarily result in a completely 'new' conjunction of interrelating sequences of sign events which constitutes the pro-filmic event. Even the act of framing to set up a shot is such a disjunction/reassembly activity. At the second stage, this reassembly is in its turn transformed by the cinematic codes,¹⁸ and is presented to us in the form of a filmic discourse, a film text. Film therefore isolates sequences of sign events out of sign systems, and arranges them into a new pattern, making these sequences similar – due to the iconic imitative qualities of the image – but different – due to them being transformed by the codes – and in the process investing them with a new meaning. The transforming function of the cinematic codes, therefore could be seen as an indication of the fact that the cinema comprehends (in its literal sense) and comments upon sign systems in the real world which thereby become sign system objects within the film. The film

itself has become a meta-system, in the same way that a critical analysis of a literary work requires a meta-language in order to analyse the 'language-object' under scrutiny. The difference between film as a meta-language and a linguistic meta-language resides in the impossibility for the cinema to ever become a scientific meta-language: it can never be anything but a descriptive or a translative meta-language.¹⁹

Notes

1. Written in Russian in 1921, reprinted in *Readings in Russian Poetics* (also in Russian), Michigan Slavic Materials, II, Ann Arbor, 1962. French translations in *Théories de la Littérature*, textes des formalistes russes réunis, présentés et traduits par Tzvetan Todorov, Coll. *Tel Quel*, Ed du Seuil, Paris, 1965, pp 98-108.
2. For a further discussion of the role of the 'superfluous detail' see Roland Barthes, 'L'Effet de Réel', in *Communications*, Nr 11, pp 84-89.
3. *Communications*. No 11, 1968.
4. Christian Metz, *Le Dire et le Dit au cinéma* in *Communications* No 11, 1968, pp 22-33; reprinted in C. Metz, *Essais sur la Signification au Cinéma*, Ed Klincksieck, Paris, 1968, under the title: '*Le Dire et le Dit au Cinéma: vers le déclin d'un vraisemblable?*'
5. T. Todorov, in the introductory essay to *Communications* No 11, adds a third definition of 'verisimilitude': 'one will speak of the verisimilitude of a work according to the degree in which this work attempts to induce us to believe that it conforms to reality and not to its own laws. In other words, verisimilitude is the mask donned by the laws of the text, a mask which we are supposed to take for a relation with reality'. Todorov's definition however is that of a contemporary theoretician while the praxis of artists in the cinema is still dominated and determined by the two definitions given earlier in this essay.
6. For a further discussion of these terms, see C. Metz, *Langage et Cinéma*, in the series *Langue et Langage*, Libr. Larousse, Paris, 1971, especially the chapter dealing with the argument that the cinema is constituted by a language with a 'multiple specificity', pp 157-190.
7. In linguistics referent designates the thing to which a word refers. In this context, the term derives its meaning from the linguistic model signifier/signified-referent; a model which implies the triad referent-sign-concept. I use the term to designate the objects in the 'real' world, and by extension, as the opposite to diegesis.
8. The terms 'form' and 'substance' of 'expression' and 'content' are being used in accordance with the meaning given to these terms in *Elements of Semiology* by Roland Barthes, Jonathan Cape (Eng. Trans.), London, 1967, cf pp 38-46.
9. Jean-Louis Comolli: *Technique et Idéologie, Caméra, perspective de champ*, in *Cahiers du Cinéma*, Nos 229-233, 1971.
10. The birth of the fictional narrative of course must not be attributed to a conscious theoretical decision on the part of the film makers and producers. It appears largely to have been an economic necessity: the filming of newsworthy events and other 'scenes from life' was expensive, as cameramen had to roam the streets and travel to distant places often for a little as a single reel of film shot in circumstances which in no way guaranteed a good quality product. To shoot films under well-defined and controlled conditions proved less expensive, in that most risks were eliminated.

The transition from news-film and family-scenes to the fiction film progressed via the 'recording' of variety acts and performances of famous stage artists, both still newsworthy events. Thus the enormous demand for new products provided the conditions necessary for the emergence of the fiction film, rather than a conscious attack on 'conservative realism'.

11. These are not the codes themselves, but elements within them. According to C. Metz the corresponding codes would be: 'clair-obscur' (lighting), 'mouvance' (camera-movement) and the 'multiplicité' (editing) of the mechanically produced iconic image.
12. This is a simplification of the actual situation: film makers had to conform to the set of rules which producers had deduced from the fact that certain films were successful while others were not. For this idea I am indebted to Pascal Kane's study of Roman Polanski, published in the series *7ième Art*, Ed du Cerf, Paris, 1970, pp 33-38.
13. This statement should not be taken literally, because the image of a star and the roles played by that star never fully coincide. It is certain elements which became apparent in the first successful role which determine the future 'formula' of the star. This 'formula' can be extended, but never contradicted.
14. Roland Barthes, *L'Activité Structuraliste*, in *Lettres Nouvelles*, 1963, reprinted in *Essais Critiques*, Col Tel Quel, Ed du Seuil, Paris 1964, pp 213-220.
15. C. Metz, *Les Sémiotiques, ou sémies*, in *Communications* No 7 1966 pp 146-157.
16. C. Metz, *Langage et Cinéma*, pp 33-36.
17. See for instance Jacques Bertin, *La Graphique* in *Communications* No 15, 1970, or Michel Matarosso, *Lecture Seconde de Nice* in *Communications*, No 17, 1971.
18. C. Metz, *Langage et Cinéma*, p 169 et seq.
19. Octave Mannoni in *Clefs Pour l'Imaginaire ou l'Autre Scène*, Ed du Seuil, 1969, proposes the following definition of the term meta-language: 'on devrait appeler "meta-langage" le langage qui vise un référent au-delà de lui-même . . . et appeler "langage" (pure language) le langage considéré comme un objet, comme le référent du discours linguistique . . .' cf p 56. However, this idea of the sign-system-object being the referent of the meta-language would need further elucidation before one could usefully apply it to the cinema. There is a possibility that it could lead to the conclusion that it may be necessary to distinguish between the 'filmic referent' and the 'referent in reality': eg when we see a castle in a film, the referent in reality may be a plaster model while the filmic referent would be a real castle.

Patrick L. Ogle

A matter of continuing concern and some puzzlement to the author is the matter of the range and weight of relative emphases in film scholarship. Film is, as seems readily apparent, an art form and communications medium that has arisen from, and continues to be dependent upon, a relatively high level of technology. It is therefore surprising that most critical and scholarly work on film seems almost consciously to eschew any concern for film technology and the relationship it bears to many aesthetic and historic trends in the cinema. Just as aesthetic-communicative desires on the part of film-makers have tended to affect the direction and aims of research and problem solving in film technology, so has the ever-changing state of the art in film technology tended to define the 'band-width' within which the visual and aural styles of film art and communication could operate. Deep focus cinematography, the subject of this paper, furnishes a particularly good example of the degree to which a style of film-making can be dependent upon both aesthetics and technology.

Deep- or pan-focus cinematography as a recognised visual style in film-making first came to critical and public attention with the release of Orson Welles' film *Citizen Kane* in early to middle 1941¹. Unusual for the time, much note was taken of the contributions of Gregg Toland, ASC, who directed the photography of the film. Toland's name has become synonymous with deep focus cinematography even though some other cameramen were working along similar lines at the time, and one of them, James Wong Howe, ASC, seems to have produced a proto-deep focus film in his photography of *Transatlantic* ten years earlier.² As practised by Toland and others, deep focus cinematography constituted perhaps the first coherent alternative seen in American films to the editing-centred film theories of Eisenstein, Pudovkin, and Kuleshov. Whereas to the Russians the content of a given shot was subordinate to the feelings generated by its juxtaposition with those preceding and succeeding it, in deep focus cinematography the individual shot and the action recorded within it came to be of primary importance. In this sense the American deep focus school may be thought more cameraman-oriented than editor-oriented, and shared in common certain qualities with the German silent film tradition (not surprising, considering the number of old UFA cinematographers such as Karl Freund who were enjoying influential careers in the American industry) of concern with camera angle, camera motion, set lighting, and actor positions and movements

46 within a take. Deep focus cinematography tended toward long duration sequences, the avoidance of cutaways and reaction shots, the employment of a meticulously placed camera that only moved when necessary, and the use of unobtrusive, virtually invisible editing.

The most noticeable quality of deep focus cinematography, however, was, as its name implies, the cultivation of crisp focus throughout an unprecedented depth of field in the scene photographed. In reviewing *Citizen Kane*, the *American Cinematographer* (house organ of the American Society of Cinematographers) commented:

The result on the screen is in itself little short of revolutionary: the conventional narrow plane of acceptable focus is eliminated, and in its place is a picture closely approximating what the eye sees – virtually unlimited depth of field, ranging often from a big head close up at one side of the frame, perhaps only inches from the lens, to background action twenty, thirty, fifty, or even a hundred feet away, all critically sharp. The result is realism in a new dimension: we forget we are looking at a picture, and feel the living, breathing presence of the characters.³

While succumbing to the lingering misconception that the human eye as a lenticular system possesses extreme depth of field (for this is not the case, the eyes and brain having instead a remarkable ability to follow focus on various points of interest almost instantaneously without normal conscious awareness on the part of the viewer), the *American Cinematographer* reviewer did properly emphasise the startling crispness of focus and sense of presence conveyed by the technique. It is in this conveyed sense of presence (to be usefully distinguished from the general concept of realism – for in the light of thirty years *Citizen Kane* is seen to be anything but realistic in style) that the chief distinguishing characteristic of deep focus cinematography may reside, for in providing the viewer with visually acute high information imagery that he may scan according to his own desires without the interruptions of inter-cutting, deep focus in Andre Bazin's words 'brings the spectator into a relation with the image closer to that which he enjoys with reality'.⁴ In one way then, the deep focus aesthetic was an attempt to achieve a simulation of certain effects of theatre performance both by the elimination of certain film characteristics that pointed up the fact of there being an intermediary between viewer and performance, and by the employment of other inherently filmic characteristics that enhanced the theatrical sense of presence while simultaneously preventing any occurrence of the wretched 'canned theatre' effects of some early sound films. Chief among these latter characteristics was that of composition in depth, for the common deep focus 'all in one' shot of the type described in the *American Cinematographer* review involved spatial relationships impossible

to experience in the theatre. Deep focus cinematography foreshadowed, in a sense, the development of the wide screen formats of a dozen years later, techniques that, while using different technology and composing in breadth instead of depth, shared with deep focus the goals of sense of presence and many other qualities of the long duration take aesthetic.

While not all examples of deep focus cinematography were necessarily realist in nature or style, the primary influences upon the development of deep focus were strongly involved with the concept of realism as a proper means of expression and communication. There had always been a tradition of sharply focused and realistic American film camera work, especially in outdoor footage, as much of Billy Bitzer's work for David Wark Griffith will attest. While largely eclipsed by the heavily diffused photographic style of the later 1920's and 1930's, the realistic style was still to be seen in certain genre films (such as westerns and gangster films) whose subject matter had a certain adamant quality inconsistent with the softness of the prevailing camera style. (It is not surprising that the director for whom Gregg Toland filmed the partially deep focus *The Grapes of Wrath* and *The Long Voyage Home* in 1940 and for whom Arthur Miller, ASC, filmed the deep focus *How Green Was My Valley* in 1941 should be John Ford, whose experience with raw and realistic film-making had gone back to *The Iron Horse* of 1924 and before. Ford's *Stagecoach* of 1939, as photographed by Bert Glennon, ASC, looked forward very much to *Citizen Kane* in its use of ceilinged sets, wide angle lenses, and distinctly 'un-Hollywood' lighting.⁵) Thus in the controversy surrounding the visual style of *Citizen Kane* it was possible for intelligent and presumably fair-minded cinematographers of such eminence as Leon Shamroy, ASC, and Gaetano Gaudio, ASC, to take the extreme position that there was really nothing new about deep focus, and that it consisted essentially of a return to practices of a quarter century earlier.^{6,7}

Probably more important to the development of the deep focus style were influences toward realism that came from outside Hollywood and, to a large extent, from outside motion picture making. The 1930's saw the rise of the documentary film as an international movement. Some of the better American examples such as Pare Lorentz' *The Plow that Broke the Plains* of 1936 (cinematography directed by Paul Strand, widely known as a still photographer) and *The River* of 1937 were to prove enduring examples of crisp *plein air* photography. The work of Jean Renoir in France during that decade was also of a very realistic sort, even looking forward – in his *Toni* of 1934 – to post-war Italian Neorealism. Renoir's filming style tended toward the preservation of a greater depth of field than usual for the time, and toward the use of compositions that exploited this somewhat expanded depth by the inclusion of realistic background activities often dispensed with by more theatrically

48 influenced directors. Renoir's actors usually moved about in evenly lit naturalistic settings, and takes tended to be of rather long duration. Significant actions were highlighted by judicious use of the moving camera, but one which moved only for good reason, not in the wilful and near-gratuitous fashion of the German silent era 'camera as actor'.

The attitudes toward realism and practices in filming of Jean Renoir provide an important link with some non-cinematic factors that were tending to move American cinematographic styles in a more realistic direction. One of Renoir's assistants during the middle 1930's was Henri Cartier-Bresson, who has become world-renowned in his own right as a still photographer of the unposed and candid 'decisive moment'. Cartier-Bresson's photographs (always taken, interestingly enough, with a Leica camera, which uses motion picture film and was originally developed by Oscar Barnack during the early 1920's as an economic method of making film exposure and lighting tests in the German UFA film studios) were seen by millions of people, along with the similarly realistic work of other photojournalists, in magazines such as *Life* and *Look*. James Wong Howe, whose lifelong interest has been in the cultivation of realism in cinematography, made a perceptive remark in mid-1941:

There is one thing about modern cinematography which I feel no one has emphasised sufficiently. This is the profound influence the photographic and picture-magazines which have become so popular during the last ten years have had on styles in studio camerawork.⁸

Howe felt that the tendency toward crisper definition, greater depth, and occasional use of higher contrast was primarily due to a change in public taste 'directly traceable to the growth in popularity of miniature camera photography, and to the big picture magazines'⁹ in which the public saw the stark realism of miniature camera photojournalism every week. This change in public taste, Howe considered, had evoked a change in cinematographic style 'so slowly and subtly that we ourselves have scarcely been conscious of it...'.¹⁰

The popularity of miniature camera photojournalism may have had more effect on changes in cinematographic style than just changes toward 'slice of life' realism. For reasons that have never been clear, the so-called 'normal' lenses for motion picture cameras (those which supposedly give the most natural perspective effects and which are consequently used in the majority of picture-taking situations) have always been of approximately twice the focal length of normal focal length lenses for still camera lenses of similar negative size. A 35mm (film gauge) motion picture camera has a normal lens of 50mm focal length, the same focal length as that of a 35mm still camera such as the Leica, whose negative size area is twice that of the motion picture camera frame.

The fact that the Leica normal lens focal strength is (relatively speaking) half that of the motion picture camera means that most pictures made with the still camera take in an angle of view twice as wide as that taken in by a motion picture camera filming the same event from the same distance. For cinematographers to duplicate on film the perspective and foreground-background image size relationships normally seen in the picture magazines, they would have to use what were considered in motion picture terms distinctly wide angle lenses. As this was precisely what the deep focus cinematographers did, much of the 'realism' attributed to deep focus may be due to the unconscious awareness on the part of the viewer that the object sizes and spatial relationships correspond more closely to those of still photography (and, in truth, to the way one's eyes tend to see) in deep focus than in conventional cinematography.

While the tendencies toward realism mentioned in the preceding paragraphs had a noticeable effect both on the general American cinematographic style and upon the development of the deep focus style, it should not be thought that the appearance of deep focus was either entirely inevitable or predictable on the basis of those tendencies alone. A number of changes in motion picture technology were necessary to provide the range of capabilities from which Toland and others chose those suitable for synthesis into the mature deep focus style. The significance of these changes can perhaps best be appreciated by a brief historical survey of the evolution in film stocks and developers, lenses, and lighting from the early 'hard edge' style of circa 1915, through the heavily diffused 'fuzzygraph' era¹¹ of the later 1920's and early 1930's, to the coming of the deep focus style in 1941.

The era of silent film-making that extended from the time of David Wark Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) until the coming of sound in the later 1920's has often been painted as one of great art prevailing over woefully deficient technology. Such a viewpoint may be based excessively on hindsight. Many a contemporary student of film history will dutifully shake his head in thinking of the agonies doubtless suffered by cinematographers confined to the use of orthochromatic film. What he will likely not be aware of is that orthochromatic film (a type sensitive to green, blue-violet, and ultra-violet light) constituted a very real improvement over the 'ordinary' or non-colour-sensitised emulsions (sensitive only to blue-violet and ultra-violet)¹² that had been the basic material of even earlier film-making. (Blue-sensitive film, semi-ironically, was to reappear in modified form in 1939 as Fine Grain Release Positive film, an important ingredient in the deep focus technique.) As panchromatic film emulsions (a type reasonably sensitive to the entire visible spectrum rather than just the shorter wavelengths) had been first introduced in 1913¹³ but had not proved popular, it would appear that cinematographers of the era

50 may have preferred to use orthochromatic film. Most of this preference may have been due to the innate conservatism of many cinematographers (upon whose heads much wrath would inevitably descend in the event of photographic mishap), but some of it may have been due to the conduciveness of orthochromatic film to the crisp contrasty style of cinematography (which had its parallels in the 'f-64' school of still photography) that prevailed until sometime into the 1920's. While orthochromatic film was an intrinsically slow (ie not particularly light sensitive) emulsion type, this factor may not have been very obvious at the time as the extremely strong and contrasty developers then in use compensated in large measure for the deficiencies in film speed, albeit at a great cost in excessive graininess. Cinematographers often found themselves having to stop their lenses down to f-45 for filming exteriors,¹⁴ indicating that the violent developing chemicals of the time gave the film an effective speed of over 160 ASA, similar to that of medium to fast black-and-white panchromatic emulsions of today. An f-45 lens aperture set on a normal 50mm motion picture camera lens provided an extreme depth of field, such that objects would be rendered sharp at distances from just under two feet to infinity. The full deep focus potentials of this great depth of field seem rarely if ever to have been explored at the time, however.

The sharp, contrasty qualities of orthochromatic film were well-matched by the characteristics of the lenses in use at the time, critically sharp-cutting anastigmats such as Dagors and Tessars¹⁵ whose maximum apertures of f-3.5 gave measurably greater depth of field than those of later, faster lenses.

Lighting during the era of orthochromatic film was chosen for compatibility with the green-blue-violet sensitivity of the stock. As this was the era of the silent film, much filming was done outside, where sunlight and skylight provided rich and free sources of light concentrated toward the shorter wavelengths of the visible spectrum. At one time indoor filming had been accomplished largely by the use of studios with glass skylights, but as time went on production companies began to eschew the vagaries of weather by turning exclusively to the use of artificial illumination. Banks of mercury vapour lamps (identical in concept and similar in spectral distribution to modern street and highway lamps) were used for broad, general lighting, and provided the suitable bluish light needed with high electrical efficiency. The other primary light source at the time was the carbon arc lamp (which in later improved form was perhaps to be the crucial element in deep focus cinematography). The carbon arc lamp produced a very blue light (similar to that emitted by a contemporary electric arc welder) of high intensity per watt of electricity consumed. Unlike the mercury vapour lamp, the carbon arc lamp emitted light from a very small area. This point-source lighting tended to bring out textures and cast very sharp shadows, adding strongly to the sense of crispness

and contrast already evoked by the film and lens types.

Some time into the 1920's the extremely hard and sharp look in cinematography began to give way to a softer, more diffused style, paralleling a similar trend in still photography. This was first achieved by the optical means of fitting layers of gauze over the camera lens and placing optical diffusers called 'silks' over the lights. Some visual softening appeared with the introduction of a number of newer and more complex motion picture lenses, the designs of which traded off a degree of lens correction in order to achieve greater light-gathering power. These lenses, with maximum apertures of about f-2.3, also possessed intrinsically less depth of field at maximum aperture (which came to be used as the normal filming aperture) than had the older, simpler lenses. This increased softness was optical rather than tonal, for orthochromatic film remained contrasty by nature. As part of the trend toward softening of shadows and lowering of contrast, Lee Garmes, ASC, began experimenting with the use of 'Mazda' incandescent lamps for lighting films during the mid-1920's.¹⁸ The Mazda lamp was initially at a disadvantage when used with orthochromatic film as much of its light was in the yellow-orange region to which orthochromatic film was blind, and its electrical efficiency was significantly lower than that of either arcs or mercury vapour lamps. The initial value of the Mazda lamp was in the non-point-source quality of the light, for it cast significantly softer shadows and tended to suppress textures. This single advantage of the Mazda lamp would probably not have been enough to ensure its success had not other events intervened, however, for 'as late as 1927 the majority of motion picture productions were made using orthochromatic negative with mercury vapour and arc lamps . . .'¹⁷

Nineteen twenty-eight was a pivotal year for the American film industry, witnessing as it did the first significant amount of sound film production, the introduction of the soft-looking finer grain Type 1 panchromatic film by Eastman Kodak, and the beginning of the metamorphosis from arc to Mazda for studio lighting.¹⁸ Panchromatic film stock and Mazda lighting proved well matched to each other, the film being sensitive to the longer wavelengths of visible radiation in which Mazda illumination was particularly rich. Intensive testing by the American Society of Cinematographers definitely proved the Incandescent to be superior for use with Panchromatic film; but I doubt if the innovation would have been accepted so readily had not sound arrived to force the issue. The 'Inkie' was the only really silent lamp available, and it naturally sprang overnight into general use.¹⁹

With the at least temporary discontinuance of the use of arc lamps due to noise problems on the newly-built sound stages, American film-making entered a period of heavily diffused images, soft tonality, and shallow depth of field that was to characterise

52 Hollywood films until into the later 1930's. While softness and diffusion was the prevailing aesthetic style of cinematography, it must be admitted that for much of the period it may not have been possible to achieve the earlier crispness even if cinematographers had wanted to, so encumbering were the demands of early sound film-making. The soft tonality panchromatic emulsions, while intrinsically more light-sensitive than orthochromatic, came to be processed in milder, more fine-grain borax-type developers (such as D-76) that greatly improved picture resolution quality but reduced effective film speed and contrast. Soft shadow Mazda lighting, crucial to sound film-making due to its silence, was less efficient electrically than arc and available only in lighting units of comparatively low power. The newer and faster lenses had almost by necessity to be used at maximum aperture, further softening the image and reducing depth of field.

While the coming of the sound film had had a strong influence on moving cinematography away from the crisp, contrasty, depth style of much of the silent era, another new film type and technology had a similarly strong influence in making possible a return to more realistic cinematography styles in the later 1930's and in furnishing much of the technology crucial to the deep focus style. This was Technicolor (which also, in a McLuhan sort of way, may have given monochrome cinematography the possibility of becoming an art by supplanting it as the basic medium of mass popular visual entertainment). If the silencing of cameras and lights in order to record speech and music satisfactorily had been one of the major efforts of sound film technology, one of the primary problems in developing the three-colour subtractive Technicolor process was to maintain the silence of lighting equipment while enormously increasing its power and significantly shifting its colour balance. As the film stocks used in the Technicolour process had a very low effective speed and were balanced for the predominantly green-blue of daylight, Mazda incandescent lighting could no longer be relied upon as a primary lighting source. Consequently a new generation of arc lamps appeared, incorporating a number of improvements that rendered them quiet and flicker-free. Changes in the chemical formulas for the carbons used shifted the spectral distribution of the light produced such that arc could match daylight with only mild filtration by means of a straw-coloured Y-1 filter. The modern arc lamp of the middle to later 1930's retained the crisp shadow-casting and texture-revealing point-source light of its forebears, and models of remarkable intensity and carrying power began to appear.²⁰ While much of the Mazda incandescent lighting equipment commonly used in black-and-white production after 1935 dated back (in design and often in construction) to the beginning of the sound era almost a decade earlier, virtually all arc lighting developed for Technicolor work was of 1934 or later vintage and possessed substantial advantages

in uniformity, controllability, and power.^{21,22} Confined initially to use in colour production work (due both to scarcity and – one thinks – to power beyond that needed by most workers in monochrome), the new arc lights later began to be used in black-and-white production with fair frequency, the arrival of faster Technicolor film stocks in 1939²³ having allowed a sizeable reduction in colour lighting power requirements (and having even sparked something of a resurgence in the use of filtered Mazda lighting on Technicolor sets).

Developments in filmstock technology proceeded apace. The soft and fine grain (in comparison to orthochromatic) Eastman Type 1 panchromatic emulsion of 1928 was followed later the same year by the slightly faster and even softer Type 2 emulsion. February 1931 saw the introduction of the first super-sensitive panchromatic emulsion, Eastman Super Sensitive Panchromatic Negative, a stock at once materially faster, finer-grained, and softer than its predecessors. Rather than stopping down lens apertures (and thus risk losing the then-fashionable softness of image), cinematographers initiated a trend toward ever-lower key light levels on the sets (a trend that, in some quarters, continues to the present day). The introduction of Eastman Super X Panchromatic Negative in March 1935 continued the trend toward somewhat higher speed with much lower grain and improved picture quality. Super X film remained an inherently soft, low contrast emulsion, as indicated by the recommendation of the manufacturer that the film be developed to the comparatively high gamma of .70 for normal results. This characteristic of tonal softness in film stocks was abruptly reversed in late October 1938, however, when Eastman introduced Plus-X Panchromatic Negative as a new general use film, an emulsion with twice the speed of Super X, finer grain, similar developing characteristics, but with such noticeably higher contrast that many cinematographers, having grown accustomed to working with soft tonality films, were to experience real difficulty in lighting sets properly for the new film.

Two weeks after the introduction of Plus-X came the announcement of Eastman Super XX, a film possessing grain characteristics comparable to those of the standard Super X previously used, but with a film speed four times as great. Developed initially for newsreel work and other specialised and realistic filming done under difficult lighting conditions (and also developed, one suspects, to regain first place in the film speed derby from Agfa-Ansco, whose Agfa Supreme Negative and Agfa Ultra-Speed Negative emulsions had been introduced eleven months previously and had won a Class I Academy Award for the manufacturer²⁴), Super Double X film quickly came to be used in ways far different from those intended or envisaged by Eastman Kodak. A few cinematographers such as Victor Milner, ASC, became immediately aware that the high speed film widened the potential expressiveness of the medium in that:

- 54 It makes it possible for us to run the scale between extremely soft, naturalesque low-level lightings (50 foot candles or less), shot with full lens apertures, to the opposite extreme of higher level illumination (perhaps as high as 200 foot candles or more) exposed at greatly reduced apertures for a new and greater depth and crispness.²⁵

Only a very small number of cinematographers opted for the possibilities of increased crispness and depth of field, however. A greater number followed the path of James Wong Howe in maintaining full aperture filming while further lowering set lighting levels almost to those of conventional roof lighting,²⁶ thus providing more naturalistic settings within which the actors could perform. By far the greatest number of cinematographers (Milner included), however, utilised Super Double X film in a strange (but fully explainable) way. Conservative by nature and distressed by the increased contrastiness of the new general-use Plus-X emulsion, these cinematographers began to employ Super Double X as a production film with deliberate underdevelopment, a procedure that gave them lowered contrast similar to the old Super X film they had been used to, and fine grain similar to the new Plus-X emulsion.²⁷ The great loss of film speed entailed in underdevelopment was desirable to them, as it permitted the use of lighting levels and lens apertures little different from those of previous practice. The armchair paleontologist would find this a classic example of the evolutionary principle that, within a modified environment, new or changed behaviours or forms in an organism arise in the organism's attempt to return to the homeostasis of the previous environment. Ironical indeed is the realisation that while Super Double X film was to prove an important ingredient in the development of the crisp, deep focus style, the main impetus toward its use as a production filmstock was the desire to preserve the soft tonality and low depth of field of the older type of cinematography!

A final important development in film technology occurred in 1939 with the introduction of a new emulsion type in the relatively unglamorous category of release print stocks. This film, Fine Grain Release Positive, was an extremely slow stock sensitive only to blue-violet and ultra-violet light, and required printing by means of modified high pressure mercury arc light sources. To offset these inconveniences, Fine Grain Positive had the major advantage of being virtually grainless, and thus free from the problem of successive image degradation common to printing stocks before it. Picture quality improved noticeably, and the new freedom from grain multiplication through the various print generations from camera to release print allowed cinematographers to use high speed films such as Super Double X without the fear of excessive graininess. Sound quality improved even more than

did picture quality on Fine Grain Positive Film: high frequencies were reproduced far better and emulsion ground noise was reduced 6-8 decibels,²⁸ factors that would be highly important to films in which the sound track was to play a strong role.

In contrast to the relative flux that had been occurring in the areas of lighting and film stocks, the field of camera lens design had changed little since the introduction of the fast and relatively soft lenses of the late silent era. Small incremental improvements had been made in lens correction and sharpness, but a ceiling seemed to have been reached, dictated largely by the design compromises that had to be struck in dealing with the conflicting requirements of lens speed and optical quality. Revolutionary, therefore, were the implications of the announcement by two independent researchers in 1939 of the principle of lens coating, by which a microscopically thin layer of magnesium fluoride was deposited on the lens surfaces with resulting improvements in light transmissions of more than 75 per cent under some conditions. As might be expected concerning a process that promised much more efficient use of light, the lens coating principle proved of great interest to Technicolor Corporation, and the first commercial application of lens coating techniques was by Bausch & Lomb in delivering coated projection lenses to twenty-five Loew theatres in the larger cities for the first showings of *Gone With the Wind*, where improvements in screen illumination, image contrast, and sharpness of focus were noted.²⁹ Similar benefits were noted when coatings were applied to camera lenses. A typical uncoated high-speed motion picture anastigmat lens such as the Astro Pan-Tachar suffered light losses in excess of 41 per cent due to reflections from the eight air-to-glass surfaces comprising its lens formula. Such light losses were reduced to negligible proportions with the application of optical coatings. In addition internal reflection and fog-producing scattered light within the lens was largely eliminated, allowing the lens to capture a great deal of shadow detail normally lost.³⁰ William Stull, ASC, noted that lens coatings produced

... a practical increase in speed of virtually one full stop. . . .

Thus a normal f-2.3 lens, when treated is the equivalent in speed of an f-1.6 objective, but still retains the depth of field, definition, and optical quality of the f-2.3 design!

The elimination of the internal reflections gives a marked increase in the apparent definition of scenes photographed with treated lenses. . . . The picture as a whole is visibly more crisp, and details not previously evident are suddenly revealed.

In the same way depth of field is apparently considerably increased by the treated lens. It is quite possible that the circle of confusion is affected, since the resolving power is known to be increased.³¹

56 A point not made by Stull is that another great increase in depth of field became possible with coated lenses simply because the greatly increased efficiency of light transmission demanded a physically smaller lens diaphragm apertures to transmit the same amount of light as a larger aperture had previously. This smaller aperture increased both depth of field and lens sharpness.

Looking back at the technological state of the movie-making art in 1940, a determinist could well argue that the conjunction of powerful point source arc lights, fast film emulsions, and crisp coated lenses rendered inevitable the emergence of deep focus cinematography. The argument has some merit, for, indeed, a number of cinematographers seem at the time to have looked over their newly improved tools and commenced semi-independent investigations into increased-depth photography. Aware as he is of the crucial importance of much of this technology to the deep focus style, the author nevertheless feels that for deep focus to appear and develop as it did, a number of essentially aesthetic choices and creative syntheses had to occur. These choices and syntheses seem largely to have been made by one man, Gregg Toland, for while other cinematographers may have been working rather haphazardly toward a cinematographic style of increased depth, crispness, and contrast, Toland was the first person to draw together and elaborate the series of attitudes and technical tool usages that became the coherent body of filming practices constituting the deep focus style. The matter of timing and opportunity also seems very important, for without the fertile creative environments provided by William Wyler, John Ford, and especially by Orson Welles, the deep focus style might never have come into being.

Gregg Toland was an atypical cinematographer in a number of respects. In an industry given to constant shifts of personnel and employment such that a cameraman was often literally 'only as good as his last picture', Toland remained under steady contract with Samuel Goldwyn from 1926 until his death in 1948,³² and managed to retain the same personnel on his camera crew for most of that time. Although Toland and his crew were often loaned out to other studios, the relative security of employment under the Goldwyn contract and stability of competent operative personnel on his film crew probably did much to provide Toland the kind of breathing space needed for coherent creative endeavour.

Although he had been a director of photography since the beginning of the decade, Toland did not reach prominence among Hollywood cinematographers until early 1938, when his expertise in filming Goldwyn's *Dead End* for William Wyler (completed the previous summer) was noted in the April issue of the *American Cinematographer*. Most of the film was made on a single indoor set of a New York City street, and Toland made an unusual (for the time) effort to achieve the realistic look of sunshine illumina-

tion by bunching eight powerful arc lamps together to stimulate the crisp, single source parallel-ray illumination of sunlight.³³ Toland's name soon became familiar to readers of the ASC magazine. A few months later, in discussing his work on *Kidnapped* (the version with which Otto Preminger was very briefly involved), the magazine was to allude to Toland's innovative and adaptive nature in mentioning that:

The lighting of the picture followed his general custom of using a low key unless some reason out of the ordinary indicated to the contrary. In spite of his preference for a low key, there is no hesitation on his part in using lamps when in his judgment there is photographic occasion.³⁴

Toland had also just finished his first film in colour, *The Goldwyn Follies*. As this film was photographed on the slow, pre-GWTW emulsions that required set key lighting not much below the 800-1,000 foot candle level common in 1936,³⁵ Toland was thus by the middle of 1938 quite proficient at simulating realistic lighting on indoor sets and knowledgeable in the use of arcs at very high lighting levels; both practices were to be elemental to deep focus cinematography.

Although the use of Eastman Super Double X film as a production film stock seems to have originated with Joseph Valentine, ASC,³⁶ a number of other cinematographers (including Toland, William Daniels, ASC, and Rudolph Maté, ASC) began to use the stock regularly soon after. The film in whose production Toland first used Super XX is not known to the author, but it would not seem unlikely for the stock to have been used at least sporadically in William Wyler's *Wuthering Heights* of 1939, a film in which Toland experimentally employed deep focus in a few scattered scenes,³⁷ and a film for whose black-and-white photography he was to receive the Academy Award in 1940. Similarly, Toland's first production use of coated lenses is difficult to pinpoint, although he was later noted as one of the first cinematographers, if not the first, to experiment with coated lenses and use them in important productions.³⁸ John Ford's *The Grapes of Wrath* of 1940, though involving a masterful use of hard, low-fill source lighting for a realistic documentary look, seems to have been filmed too early (later 1939)³⁹ to claim the honour. Toland very probably did use coated lenses in filming Ford's *The Long Voyage Home*, however, which was in production toward the middle of 1940,⁴⁰ and in which, as in *The Grapes of Wrath*, some still rather tentative deep focus effects were used.

In Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* of 1941, any qualities having to do with the tentative or provisional in photographic style (or anything else, for that matter) had disappeared, and the mature deep focus style emerged. As well as constituting the first full-fledged example of the deep focus style, *Citizen Kane* may also be the best

58 example, displaying as it does an uncompromised self-assuredness of visual style that many later deep focus films could not match. The coherence of *Citizen Kane's* visual aspect (a coherence shared by the dialogue, sound, and music of the film) is due in large measure to the conditions under which the film was produced, for the making of *Citizen Kane* constituted a major coming together of technological practice with aesthetic choice in an environment highly conducive to creativity.

Judging that therein lay an unusual opportunity for photographic innovation, Toland actively sought the assignment to shoot the film, and brought his veteran operative crew with him to the RKO studios to do so. Unusual in a Hollywood production of the time, Toland was on the job for a full half year, including preparation and actual shooting.⁴¹ The importance of Orson Welles, both in terms of his own creative contributions and his encouragement of innovative behaviour in others, cannot be overemphasised. Toland was later gratefully to acknowledge Welles' willingness to let him experiment with photographic effects that often took weeks to achieve, remarking that 'such differences as exist between the cinematography in *Citizen Kane* and the camera work on the average Hollywood product are based on the rare opportunity provided me by Orson Welles, who was in complete sympathy with my theory that the photography should fit the story'.⁴²

Coming to his first turn at film direction from a notoriety-filled period of work in radio and live theatre, Welles was determined to give *Citizen Kane* the kind of unique imprint that he had made upon his efforts in the other media. Whether due to his theatrical experience (in which action occurs within specific spatial bounds primarily within real-time duration) or that in radio (in which events take place in a fluidly homogeneous 'field' very different from the discrete segmentation of visually perceived space), Welles became strongly desirous of creating a film in which actions were to flow smoothly into each other by means of imperceptible transitions, with intercutting and inserts to be eliminated as completely as possible. In achieving this, according to Toland:

We arranged our action so as to avoid direct cuts, to permit panning or dollying from one angle to another whenever that type of camera action fitted the continuity. By way of example, scenes which conventionally would require a shift from close-up to full shot were planned so that the action would take place simultaneously in extreme foreground and extreme background.⁴³

Although the fluidity of effect in storytelling desired by Welles seemed almost ideally suited in concept to the deep focus style with which Toland had been experimenting, the cinematographer no doubt found his technological and innovative expertise fully

tested, for nothing quite like this had ever been attempted before. That *Citizen Kane* remains a visually exciting film over thirty years after its release is a testament to the rightness of Toland and Welles' aesthetic choices and furnishes an example of creative exploitation of the then-current limits of technology to which the much-abused term 'classic' does not seem inappropriate.

Citizen Kane was one of the first important productions filmed with the Mitchell BNC motion picture camera, a device whose quiet operation was achieved by means of internal sound dampening measures.⁴⁴ The elimination of the bulky external blimp previously required had important consequences for filming in the deep focus style. Simply dispensing with the need for shooting through the optical glass plate of the blimp sharpened up the photographed image and increased light transmission over ten per cent.⁴⁵ Lens focus, depth of field, and photographic composition could easily be checked without having to open up a blimp. The relative compactness and light weight of the self-blimped Mitchell BNC must have proved of distinct value under the conditions of use imposed by the generally small, deep sets within which *Citizen Kane* was filmed, allowing the camera to be raised, lowered, panned, and dollied (no doubt often by means of an hydraulic tripod and dolly-track system previously developed by Toland)⁴⁶ with comparative ease. An additional psychological advantage may have accrued in the use of this camera, as its comparatively small size surely rendered its presence less intimidating to the actors, who often found themselves having to perform only two or three feet away from it.

While the twenty-five millimeter focal length wide angle lens was a standardised item in most cinematographers' inventories of equipment, it was normally used only in situations where the camera could not be moved back far enough to capture all the relevant action within the field of view of the normal 50mm lens. The distinguishing feature of Toland's wide angle lens was in the way he used it. Like Howe and Glennon before him, Toland was both aware of the inherently greater depth of field of the wide angle lens (following the rule of thumb that depth of field varied inversely as the square of the magnification of the lens)⁴⁷ and of the fact that the different perspective given by the lens could be used for dramatic effect. Where Toland went beyond Howe and Glennon's occasional semi-standardised use of the wide angle lens was in using his stopped down to f-8, f-11, or even f-16, extending depth of field in some cases from less than two feet to infinity! With Toland's small aperture wide angle lens, a cinema aesthetic of non-intercut compositions in depth became fully realisable.

The use of a coated lens (the 'Vard' opticoating system, developed at CalTech)⁴⁸ was highly important to the deep focus cinematography of *Citizen Kane*, for the minutely thin chemical

60 deposit (amounting in thickness to a fraction of the wavelength of light) on the air-to-glass surfaces of the lens doubled light transmission, sharpened the imagery and contrast, and made possible filming practices previously considered quite unattainable. As a coated lens at f-8 transmitted the same amount of light as an uncoated optic at f-5.6, scenes could be filmed with the increased depth of field of the former aperture, but with the halved lighting requirements of the latter. The most noticeable new filming technique afforded by the use of coated objectives was that of shooting into lights, examples of which are seen in the several sequences dealing with Susan Alexander's opera debut in *Citizen Kane*. Without lens coatings such shots would have been unusably washed out and diffuse.

Employment of Eastman Super XX film as a production stock joined with coated lenses in helping permit the use of the small lens apertures necessary to Toland's compositions in depth. Unlike most cinematographers, Toland used the stock at full rated speed, developing time, and contrast. While the film speed of Super Double X (128 ASA for daylight or arcs, 80 ASA for tungsten-Mazda) may not seem remarkable by contemporary standards, the two points should be borne in mind that Super Double X did constitute an enormous advance over the Super X stock (32 ASA for daylight, 20 ASA for Mazda) that for all practical purposes had preceded it, and that the American Standards Association criteria for determining film speeds have been modified since that time such that by the current measurement system Super Double X would have a daylight ASA film speed of slightly over 250 – reasonably fast even by today's standards. The relatively new (and by no means universally used) Eastman Fine Grain Release Positive film stock was utilised for the final release prints to motion picture theatres, insuring protection of the Eastman Super Double X footage from grain multiplication or other image degradation and significantly improving the reproduction fidelity of *Citizen Kane*'s sound track, itself as revolutionary as the film's photographic style.

Granting that camera, lenses, and film stocks played important roles in the deep focus cinematography of *Citizen Kane*, nevertheless the true *sine qua non* of the style seems to have involved the lighting equipment and its method of employment. Faced with the desire to film at diminished apertures within narrow, deep, roofed-over sets, Toland had to rely entirely on floor-level lighting of very considerable intensity and carrying power. 'The answer, of course, was to use arcs very extensively. It is safe to say that *Citizen Kane* could not have been made without modern arc lighting'.⁴⁹ As the spectral distribution of arcs resembled that of daylight in that the preponderance of energy was to be found among the shorter wavelengths of visible radiation, all the inherent light sensitivity of the Super Double X emulsion could be

utilised, for the stock was half again as fast under daylight-arc conditions than when exposed to Mazda-incandescent illumination. While also electrically more efficient in terms of lumens per watt, the primary advantage of arc lighting as used on *Citizen Kane* was in terms of sheer power. Toland's general practice was to use arc broads (specifically, the Mole-Richardson 'Duarc' developed for colour work)⁵⁰ set back about twice as far (20-30 feet) from the players as incandescent broadsides would have been, thus increasing the depth of field of uniform illumination. Toland commented that:

... the use of arcs permitted us to light this way [floor lighting from front of set] and yet to avoid the unevenness of exposure which might normally be expected under such circumstances. ... With the [Mazda-type] lamp nearer the action, its depth of illuminative field might be a matter of two or three feet. With an arc placed further back, your subject can move freely over an area of ten feet or more in depth without undesirable changes in exposure value. Arc illumination, in a word, gives you depth of field in lighting to match the optical depth modern technique affords.⁵¹

To permit filming at reduced lens apertures, lighting levels on the *Citizen Kane* sets were very high, quite atypical for the time.⁵² While cinematographers such as James Wong Howe would prefer a key light level of 35 foot candles when using Super XX film,⁵³ Toland was using at least 320 foot candle key lighting for his set-ups at f-8, rising to more than 1,300 foot candles in the occasional shots made at f-16. The fact that arc illumination was somewhat easier to look into than that from reflectors or Mazda lighting must have been only of small comfort to the actors!

Another (and final) way – besides allowing deep focus compositions – in which Toland's lighting for *Citizen Kane* furthered Welles' desire to avoid direct cutting or traditional transitions occurred in the lap dissolves that provided most transitions in the film. A pair of dimmers were used so that an overlapped sequence – (1) background of first shot dims; (2) players in first shot dim; (3) background of second shot fades in; (4) players in second shot fade in – could occur in which both imagery and lighting worked together in smoothing the transition almost to imperceptibility. This sense of various elements working smoothly together seems to characterise all of the film, and in intelligently blending compositional and tonal desires with technological capabilities, Gregg Toland created mature deep focus cinematography.

Considering Orson Welles' own flair for publicity and the pseudo-exposé qualities of the film's screenplay, *Citizen Kane* could hardly help attracting much notoriety and controversy upon its release. Part of this notoriety and controversy surrounded the cinematography and the cinematographer, a most unusual occurrence in the American film industry. Gregg Toland's name came

62 closer to becoming a household word than any other cameraman's before or since. Mass circulation magazines published photo stories demonstrating the principle of deep focus and featuring its creator.⁵⁴ Controversy raged among cameramen: some hailed it as a breakthrough, other considered it a slightly silly retrogression to the early days of film-making. Other films began to appear soon after in essentially the deep focus style. Arthur Miller, ASC, filmed *How Green Was My Valley* for John Ford in 1941 in a somewhat toned-down deep focus that won him the Academy Award for black-and-white photography (defeating Toland's *Citizen Kane*) in 1942. Toland himself filmed *The Little Foxes* in 1941 for William Wyler (and was thoroughly unhappy in having done so, as delays on the set made it impossible for him to film *How Green Was My Valley* for which he seems to have originally been slated),⁵⁵ and *Ball of Fire* for Howard Hawks the same year. A comedy, *Ball of Fire* is of interest as perhaps the only high-key deep focus film, Toland himself feeling that in many ways the Hawks work posed greater technical problems than had Welles'.⁵⁶ Arthur Edeson, ASC, filmed John Huston's first film *The Maltese Falcon* of 1941 in a strong deep focus, outdoing Toland in using an even wider angle (21mm focal length) lens. Stanley Cortez, ASC, retained much deep focus in Welles' second film *The Magnificent Ambersons* of 1942.

The coming of the Second World War submerged the deep focus cinematographic style (as it did so much else) in the flood of mundane but important matters having to do with fighting and winning a global conflict. Many cinematographers spent the duration in military service, filming real events with sixteen millimeter equipment that gave inherently greater depth of field than had the thirty-five millimeter studio cameras. Thus, though deep focus cinematography did not reappear as a specific style after World War II, many of its qualities found their way, in modified form, into standard Hollywood usage by way of these returning cinematographers. In the postwar years, as today, crisp deep focus cinematography came to be seen for what it finally is – one possible visual means of conveying experience, just as is diffused shallow focus cinematography. The primary contribution of Gregg Toland and others in developing deep focus may have been in demonstrating that such a range of choice exists.

Additional Notes

In the course of research for the preceding paper, the author had occasion to come upon a number of items that, though not all related directly to the techniques employed in achieving extreme depth of field in the deep focus style, are interesting enough to merit inclusion and brief comment.

Gregg Toland himself continued experimentation toward the

end of achieving yet greater depth of field during the postwar period. No results of these experiments seem to appear in any of his postwar films, however. At the time of his death in late 1948, Toland was about to begin filming *Roseanna McCoy*, in which he planned to employ a so-called 'ultimate focus' lens with an aperture of f-64. Although such a phenomenally small lens opening would have required the full measure of postwar advances in film speed and lighting power to achieve proper exposure of the film, the lens offered a tantalising capability: depth of field extending from less than six inches to infinity!⁵⁷

In September 1936, the well-known cinematographer Hal Mohr, ASC (whose credits run the range from *The Jazz Singer* of 1927 to *The Wild One* of 1954, and beyond) described a system he had developed to selectively extend focal depth in certain scenes contained in the films *The Green Pastures* and *Bullets or Ballots*.⁵⁸ Utilising the optical principle of the 'swinging back' that allows users of certain still cameras to adjust the plane of focus to run through objects at different distances from the camera, Mohr had developed a ball-and-socket lens mount that permitted a specially chosen Leica Summar 50mm f-2 still camera lens to pivot about its nodal point. Using his swing-mount lens, Mohr was able to angle the plane of focus such that a figure in close-up on one side of the frame would share equal sharpness with a distant figure on the other side. Alternately, an entire group of faces could be in focus, from children at the bottom of the frame in front to adults near the top of the frame much further back. An obvious drawback of the swinging lens, as Mohr himself allowed, was that action and composition had to be planned so that important parts of the scene were disposed along the diagonal line of focus, for sharpness fell off quickly in front or behind the plane of focus just as in conventional lenses. The inventor felt the swing lens to be of value despite its drawbacks, however, noting that it had allowed him to avoid focus shifts or the breaking up of scenes into individual closer shots. Although his device did not gain widespread popular acceptance among his peers, Hal Mohr was prophetic in taking concrete personal action toward achieving a cinematographic style of increased depth and reduced intercutting. The possible influence of Mohr's two increased focal depth films upon the sensibilities of other cinematographers might be an interesting topic for further research.

During the 1941-2 heyday of deep focus cinematography, several systems were proposed that endeavoured to achieve deep focus effects without the need for small lens apertures and strong lighting of the Toland systems or the special compositional requirements of Mohr's method. One such approach was the 'IR System', developed by a design team headed by a past president of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers, who described it in a very lengthy article in the January 1942 issue of the *American Cinema-*

64 *tographer*.⁵⁹ Briefly, the IR system involved splitting up the depth of the scene to be photographed into as many as four separate spatial regions. These separate zones were lit either by electronic flashtube or mechanically shuttered conventional lighting that made it possible to illuminate each zone separately for a precisely delimited time. The zoned and timed lighting system connected electromechanically with a specially modified motion picture camera that, in addition to the conventionally rotating shutter disc, possessed another rotating disc within which reposed a number of specially ground lenticular elements called 'diffo plates'. Each diffo plate instantaneously changed the focus of the camera lens when rotated into place behind it, adjusting the focus of the lens to that region of the scene being briefly illuminated by the synchronised zone lighting. In operation, therefore, each frame of film recorded four separate exposures at four different points of focus. The IR system did seem to work, although as can be imagined simplicity was not its keynote. Strong efforts had to be made to prevent lighting spillover between illumination zones lest mysterious hot spots occur in the frame. Whether due to the exigencies of the war effort or to its own deficiencies, the IR system was not heard of again. Considering their ability to design and develop an incredibly complex method of achieving an effect rather simply arrived at by Gregg Toland, the author has little doubt but that the people who developed the IR system quickly and easily found rewarding and congenial work in areas such as military hardware development.

Another approach to increasing depth in cinematography was described in the very next issue of the *American Cinematographer*.⁶⁰ This device, called the Electroplane camera, shared with the IR system the attempt to provide a sense of depth similar to that of the eye by means of an electromechanical analogue to the focus-changing scanning through which the eye constantly cycles. Much simpler than the IR system, the principle feature of the Electroplane camera was its lens. The so-called 'Detrar' lens was an otherwise rather conventional optic, but with a rapidly oscillating internal element that shifted focus back and forth from four feet to infinity many times a second. The oscillation was provided by an electro-magnetic assembly very similar to the voice coil of a loudspeaker, the system relying upon the optical principle that light energy levels (the ability to form a latent image on the film) reach their highest when an image is in sharpest focus. As the lens rapidly scanned focus back and forth during the exposure of a single frame, images affected the film most strongly at sharpest focus, tending to overwhelm blurs. While one might imagine a problem arising with regard to a 'halo' of unfocused image surrounding the sharp image, this did not seem to present any major obstacle to the design. Alas, like the IR system, the Electroplane camera was not heard from again, but a recent patent by Pathé

of France indicates that the principle of increased depth through oscillating focus may yet return to use in Super Eight millimeter motion picture cameras, where the convenience of focus-free filming may well outweigh the slight image degradation probable with such a system.⁶¹

As a final aside, the three dimensional picture would seem to be the next logical step beyond deep focus cinematography. Unfortunately, where deep focus had Orson Welles, 3-D had Arch Oboler, and gimmick supplanted art. Three dimensional films proved a short-lived fad that died with the coming of Cinemascope in 1953. While the form may yet return (and the author rather hopes it will), the lesson, it is hoped, has been learned: technology can only advance an art form when intelligently applied to significant subject matter.

Notes

As many of the notes are from issues of the *American Cinematographer*, such references will be abbreviated to *AC*.

1. Bosley Crowther, 'The Screen Review: Orson Welles' Controversial *Citizen Kane*, Proves a Sensational Film at Palace', *New York Times*, Friday, May 2, 1941, p 25.
2. Charles Higham, *Hollywood Cameramen: Sources of Light*, (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1970), pp 83-85.
3. 'Photography of the Month' *American Cinematographer*, May 1941, p 222.
4. André Bazin, *What is Cinema?*, trans Hugh Gray (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), p 35.
5. John Castle, 'Bert Glennon Introducing New Method of Interior Photography', *AC*, February 1939, pp 82-3.
6. Walter Blanchard, 'Aces of the Camera V; Leon Shamroy, ASC', *AC*, May 1941, pp 215, 254.
7. Walter Blanchard, 'Aces of the Camera XV; Tony Gaudio', *AC*, March 1942, pp 112, 137.
8. Walter Blanchard, 'Aces of the Camera VII; James Wong Howe, ASC', *AC*, p 346.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*
11. Charles G. Clarke, ASC, 'Are We Afraid of Coated Lenses?', *AC*, April 1941, p 199.
12. Emery Huse, ASC, 'The Characteristics of Eastman Motion Picture Negative Film', *AC*, May 1936, p 190.
13. Emery Huse and Gordon A. Chambers, 'Three New Negative Emulsion: Background X, Plus-X, and Super XX', *AC*, December 1938, p 487.
14. Elmer G. Dyer, ASC, 'Films I Have Used', *AC*, March 1936, p 122.
15. Walter Blanchard, 'Aces of the Camera V, Leon Shamroy', *AC*, May 1941, p 215.
16. Walter Strohm, 'Progress in Lighting Means Economy', *AC*, January 1936, p 16.
17. Emery Huse, *opus cit*, p 190.
18. Huse and Chambers, *opus cit*, p 487.
19. Walter Strohm, *opus cit*, p 16.
20. C. W. Handley, 'Advanced Technique of Lighting in Technicolor', *AC*, June 1937, p 230-1.

- 66 21. William Stull, ASC, 'Technicolor Bringing New Charm to the Screen', *AC*, June, 1937, p 235.
22. Elmer C. Richardson, ASC, 'Recent Developments in Motion Picture Lighting', *AC*, August 1937, p 319.
23. 'Faster Colour Film Cuts Light a Half', *AC*, August 1939, pp 355-6.
24. *AC*, March 1938, p 120.
25. Teddy Tetzlaff *et al*, 'Lighting the New Fast Films', *AC*, February 1939, p 70.
26. Walter Blanchard, 'Aces of the Camera VII: James Wong Howe', *AC*, July 1941, p 346.
27. Victor Milner, ASC, 'Super XX for "Production" Camerawork', *AC*, June 1941, p 269.
28. George Blaisdell, 'Fine Grain Films Make Strong Advance', *AC*, November 1939, pp 486-8.
29. 'Bausch & Lomb Increase Lens Light Transmission', *AC*, March 1940, p 104.
30. William Stull, ASC, 'Non-Glare Coating Makes Lenses One Stop Faster', *AC*, March 1940 p 109.
31. *Ibid*.
32. 'Gregg Toland, 44, Cameraman, Dies', *New York Times*, Wednesday, September 29, 1948, p 30.
33. 'Toland's "Dead End" Selected in Caucus One of Three Best', *AC*, April 1938, pp 141-2.
34. 'Toland with 20th's "Kidnapped" Awarded Camera Honours for May', *AC*, July 1938, p 274.
35. C. W. Handley, *opus cit*, pp 230-1.
36. Victor Milner, *opus cit*, p 269.
37. Walter Blanchard, 'Aces of the Camera XIII; Gregg Toland, ASC', *AC*, January 1942, pp 15 & 36.
38. *Ibid*.
39. Frank S. Nugent, 'The Screen in Review: Twentieth Century Fox Shows a Flawless Film Edition of John Steinback's "The Grapes of Wrath" with Henry Fonda and Jane Darwell, at the Rivoli', *New York Times*, Thursday, January 25, 1940, p 17.
40. Lewis Jacobs, 'Watching Ford Go By, The Toughest Director is Seen at Work on "The Long Voyage Home"', *New York Times*, Sunday, May 26, 1940, Section IX, p 4.
41. Gregg Toland, ASC, 'I Broke the Rules in "Citizen Kane"', *Popular Photography*, June 1941, p 55.
42. *Ibid*, 91.
43. *Ibid*, 90.
44. H. Mario Raimondo Souto, *The Technique of the Motion Picture Camera* (New York: Hastings House, 1969) p 61.
45. William Stull, *opus cit*, p 109.
46. Gregg Toland, ASC, 'Practical Gadgets Expedite Camera Work', *AC*, May 1939, pp 215-218.
47. J. F. Westerbury, ASC, 'Size of Image, As a Guide to Depth of Focus in Cinematography', *AC*, June 1932, p 15.
48. Gregg Toland, 'I Broke the Rules in "Citizen Kane"', *Popular Photography*, June 1941, pp 55, 90.
49. Gregg Toland, ASC, 'Using Arcs for Monochrome', *AC*, December 1941, p 558.
50. 'M-R Introduces Duarc, New Automatic Broadside', *AC*, October 1938, p 407.
51. Gregg Toland, 'Using Arcs for Monochrome', *AC*, December 1941, pp 558-9.
52. William Stull, ASC, 'Surveying Major Studio Light Levels', *AC*, July 1940, pp 294-6, 334.

53. William Blanchard, 'Aces of the Camera VII; James Wong Howe', *AC*, July 1941, p 346.
54. 'Orson Welles, Once a Child Prodigy, He Has Never Quite Grown Up', *Life*, May 26, 1941, pp 108-116.
55. Thomas Brady, 'Peace Comes to "The Little Foxes"', *New York Times*, Sunday, June 22, 1941, Section IX, p 4.
56. Gregg Toland, 'Using Arcs for Monochrome', *AC*, December 1941, pp 558-9, 588.
57. 'Gregg Toland, 44, Cameraman Dies', *New York Times*, Wednesday, September 29, 1948, p 30.
58. Hal Mohr, ASC, 'A Lens Mount for Universal Focus Effects', *AC*, September 1936, pp 370-1.
59. Alfred N. Goldsmith, 'Increasing Focal Depth with the IR System', *AC*, January 1942, pp 8, 9, 38-44.
60. Edwin P. Holden, Jr., 'The Electroplane Camera, A New System for Obtaining Natural Depth', *AC*, February 1942, pp 56-7.
61. Norman Goldberg, 'Shop Talk: Is Lens Focusing Pathé?' *Popular Photography*, November 1970, pp 60, 62, 128.

Bibliography (with comments where appropriate)

Books:

- Bazin, André, *What is Cinema?*, trans Hugh Gray. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967.
- Higham, Charles. *Hollywood Cameramen: Sources of Light*. Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1970.
- Mascelli, Joseph V. (ASC) (ed.). *American Cinematographer Manual*, Second Edition. Hollywood: American Society of Cinematographers, 1966.
- Souto, H. Mario Raimondo. *The Technique of the Motion Picture Camera*. New York: Hastings House, 1969.

Periodicals:

American Cinematographer:

- 'Bauch & Lomb Increase Lens Light Transmission', March 1940, p 104. Indicates first commercial use of lens coatings was with regard to projection lenses for a Technicolor film (*GWTW*).
- 'Faster Colour Film Cuts Light a Half', August 1939, pp 355-6. More use of incandescent Mazda possible, less fill light needed. Technicolor lighting levels brought down to Super X (ASA 32-20) levels. Used in filming *GWTW*.
- 'How Lighting Units are Developed Today', May 1937, pp 189, 193. Changes in film speeds and lighting styles. Information on fresnel-type spotlights, parabolic types, and condensor spots.
- 'M-R Introduces Duarc, New Automatic Broadside', October 1938, pp 407, 416. Developed for Technicolor use; successor to the SideArc, also developed for Technicolor. Relied on heavily by Toland for deep focus filming.
- 'Photography of the Month: *The Battle of Midway*', October 1942, p 456. Citation of value of 16mm for combat footage. Use of colour (Kodachrome), great intrinsic depth of field. John Ford as Director and cameraman.
- 'Photography of the Month: *Citizen Kane*', May 1941, p 222. ASC as impressed as everyone else. Some reservations noted, mostly with regard to several of Toland's moving camera usages.
- 'Photography of the Month: *How Green Was My Valley*', February 1942, pp 66-7, 94. Comparison with *Citizen Kane* in terms of use of deep focus.

- 68 'Photography of the Month: *Ladies in Retirement*', October 1941, p 475. Filmed by George Barnes, ACC (AA that year for *Rebecca*) and considered an example of extremely good use of pan-focus compositions.
- 'Photography of the Month: *The Little Foxes*', September 1941, p 425. Toland's first release after *Kane* was faulted for apparent bad choice of deep- vs. shallow-focus in several parts of the film.
- 'Photography of the Month: *The Maltese Falcon*', November 1941, p 548. Arthur Edeson, ASC, used his personal 21mm lens for much of the shooting. Considered a good example of how deep focus techniques could be applied to what was considered a 'programme' film.
- 'Technical Progress in 1940', January 1941, pp 6-7, 36. Summary including information on high speed camera emulsions and lens coating techniques.
- 'Technical Progress in 1941', January 1942, pp 6-7, 45. Summary including information on Toland's use of Super XX film contrasted with that of other cameramen.
- 'Toland's "Dead End" Selected in Caucus One of Three Best', August 1938, pp 141-2. Toland's use of indoor sets, 8,000 amps of lighting, sunlight simulation by grouping arcs. Mention of Toland working on his colour film, *The Goldwyn Follies*.
- 'Toland With 20th's "Kidnapped" Awarded Camera Honours for May', July 1938, p 274. Shot almost entirely indoors. Use of low key except when strong light needed. Toland's adaptability noted.
- 'What's Wrong With Cinematography', November 1938, pp 449, 457. Report of meeting at which cameraman complained that the labs were underdeveloping film and otherwise losing picture quality in relation to what the cameramen themselves were able to achieve by the use of Leicas and fine-grain developers.
- 'Lab Chief's Disagree with Cameramen', December 1938, pp 491, 492. Rebuttal by lab chiefs to above article.
- Blaisdell, George. 'How Joe Valentine Built Alpine Crispness into Sea-Level Shots - Just a Matter of Balancing Incandescent and Arcs, Having Regard to Colour of Respective Lights and Colour Sensitivity of Film Employed - Uses Arc Designed for Technicolor, February 1938, pp 52, 82. Early example of use of Technicolor lighting in monochrome production on indoor set for expressive effect. Valentine was later to originate use of Super XX film as a production stock.
- Blaisdell, George. 'Fine Grain Films Make Strong Advance', November 1939, pp 486-8. Mention of improved image and sound.
- Blanchard, Walter. 'Aces of the Camera V: Leon Shamroy, ASC', May 1941, pp 215, 254. Discourse on changing camera styles and the coming of deep focus in the inimitable Shamroy manner. Shamroy considered the coming of colour to be potentially more important for realism than deep focus monochrome.
- Blanchard, Walter. 'Aces of the Camera VIII: James Wong Howe, ASC', July 1941, pp 322, 346, 348. Howe's approach to Super XX usage. Minicam and picture magazine influence on cinematography. Realism of the Edward Weston variety and relation to film styles.
- Blanchard, Walter. 'Aces of the Camera XIII: Gregg Toland, ASC', January 1942, pp 15, 36. First uses of deep focus, coated lenses, etc.
- Blanchard, Walter. 'Aces of the Camera XV: Tony Gaudio', March 1942, pp 112, 137. Gaudio, who had been a cameraman since about 1912, considered deep focus an old idea and set of basic principles brought up to date with new materials and technology. Noted shifts of photographic style through his career.
- Castle, John. 'Bert Glennon Introducing New Method of Interior Photography', February 1939, pp 82-3. Use of roofed sets, 25mm lens,

- low light levels – avoided conventional Hollywood backlight. Used in *Stagecoach*.
- Clarke, Charles G. (ASC). 'Are We Afraid of Coated Lenses?', April 1941, pp 161, 199. Cites aesthetic use of anti-flare qualities in dealing with coated lenses, related to differing styles of cinematography.
- Clarke, Charles G. (ASC). 'How Desirable is Extreme Focal Depth?', January 1942, pp 14, 36. Short history of filming styles from sharp to diffused and back again. Plea for avoidance of dogmatism and use of styles appropriate to subject matter.
- Dyer, Elmer G. (ASC). 'Films I Have Used', March 1936, pp 122, 128-9. Recollections of orthochromatic film and its qualities. Dyer was the dean of aerial cinematographers, and filmed the aerial sequences for most of the classic flying films.
- Edouart, Farciot (ASC). '25 Years of Progress', November 1945, pp 368-9, 378, 405. Information on the quieting of arcs and the historical trends in matching lighting spectral distribution to film colour sensitivities.
- Goldsmith, Alfred. 'Increasing Focal Depth with the IR System', January 1942, pp 8-9, 38-44. Long but not overly informative article on the lens focus scanning and timed lighting IR system.
- Greene, W. Howard (ASC). 'Low Key Lighting May be as Easy in Colour as it is in Monochrome', April 1938, pp 146, 151. Improvements in selective lighting, etc. moving Technicolor away from the even floodlit style of earlier days.
- Handley, C. W. 'Advanced Technique of Lighting in Technicolor', June 1937, pp 230-1. Lists 1936 foot candle levels for B&W and Technicolor key lighting.
- Holden, Edwin P. Jr. 'The Electroplane Camera, A New System for Obtaining Natural Depth', February 1942, pp 56-7. Description of the oscillating lens deep focus system.
- Howe, James Wong (ASC). 'Reflections on Making His First Colour Production', October 1937, pp 408-12. Use of realistic, non-brilliant colours for costumes, etc. Use of arcs for fill in outdoor shooting; less squinting.
- Howe, James Wong (ASC). 'The Documentary Technique in Hollywood', June 1944, pp 10, 32. *Grapes of Wrath* mentioned. Influences of combat footage on Hollywood technique noted. Prediction of movement toward realism and increased depth of field during post-war years.
- Huse, Emery (ASC). 'The Characteristics of Eastman Motion Picture Negative Film', May 1936, pp 190-2, 202. Short history of films, differentiation between 'ordinary emulsions' and orthochromatic. Changes in developers.
- Huse, Emery, and Chambers, Gordon A. 'Three New Negative Emulsions: Background X, Plus-X, and Super XX', December 1938, pp 487-90, 525. Short history of Eastman films. Characteristics of new films discussed.
- Lang, Charles B. Jr. (ASC). 'Filtering Arcs for Matching Quality in Monochrome', June 1939, pp 269-70. Mazda-panchromatic compatibility. Changes in arc light designs.
- Lightman, Herb. 'Psychology and the Screen', May 1946, pp 160-1, 178-9. Some examples cited referring to *Citizen Kane*.
- Lightman, Herb. 'Mood in the Motion Picture', February 1947, pp 48-9, 69. Mentions Garmes, Howe, Toland. Examples of use of low key and deep focus.
- Marley, Peverell (ASC). 'Bottleneck of the Movies', December 1941, pp 564, 589. Orthochromatic film anecdotes: exposure, lighting, make-up, etc.
- Mescall, John (ASC). 'Pan-Focus for Your Home Movies', December

- 1941, pp 576, 593. Description of Toland's methods. Comment that deep focus is even easier in 16mm and 8mm filming.
- Miller, Arthur (ASC). 'Putting Naturalness into Modern Interior Lighting', March 1941, pp 104-5, 136. Considered natural-looking lighting had only become possible shortly before with development of faster films and selective lighting.
- Milner, Victor (ASC). 'Super XX for 'Production' Camerawork', June 1941, pp 269, 290. Description of the use of the stock in the usual 'overexpose-underdevelop' mode in which most cameramen used it.
- Mohr, Hal (ASC). 'A Lens Mount for Universal Focus Effects', September 1936, pp 370-1. Ball-and-socket swing mount lens for shifting plane of focus.
- Mole, Peter. 'The M-R "Brute", A New Super High Intensity Carbon Arc Lamp', December 1946, pp 438-9. A 225 amp lamp, also developed primarily for colour work.
- Polito, Sol (ASC). 'Polito Matches Daylight with Arcs in Technicolor Film at Warners', February 1938, pp 54, 84. Use of daylight arcs and filtered mazda in outdoor settings.
- Rayton, Dr Wilbur B. 'Recent Developments in Photographic Optics', February 1947, pp 44-5, 54, 56, 66. Mentions exposure problems due to light fall-off with wide angle lenses.
- Richardson, Elmer C. 'Development of a Wide-Range Studio Spot Lamp', July 1935, pp 282-3, 296. Basic description of the Solarspot fresnel lamp from which the modern arc lamp light controls were developed.
- Richardson, Elmer C. (ASC). 'Recent Developments in Motion Picture Lighting', August 1937, p 319. Note taken of advances in colour lighting over that of Black-and-White.
- Strohm, Walter. 'Progress in Lighting Means Economy', January 1936, pp 12, 16. Mazda-sound-panchromatic film inter-relationship.
- Stull, William (ASC). 'Technicolor Bringing New Charm to the Screen', June 1937, pp 234-7, 242. Superiority of Technicolor lighting to that of monochrome.
- Stull, William (ASC). 'Maté Blends Arcs and Inkies to Light "Marco Polo" Stages', June 1938, pp 234, 238-9. Choice of different lighting for different moods. Reminiscences of old arcs in relation to new technicolor type arcs. Maté also worked for Goldwyn.
- Stull, William (ASC). 'Amateur Progress in 1939 Exceeded Professional', January 1940, pp 16-17. Fine grain release stocks as major development of the year. Faster Technicolor emulsions. Great changes in Technicolor lighting. Principle of lens coating discovered.
- Stull, William (ASC). 'Non-Glare Coating Makes Lenses One Stop Faster', March 1940, pp 108, 109, 142. General description of advantages of lens coatings.
- Stull, William (ASC). 'Surveying Major Studio Light Levels', July 1940, pp 294-6, 334. Survey of key light foot candle levels and f-stops in use by cameraman and studio. Extremes were 25 FC and 36 FC, with most between 38 and 280 FC, tending toward the lower end. Lenses normally used at full aperture (f-2.3 or so), though 20th Century Fox had standardised at f-3.5 and 150 FC for all crews.
- Stull, William (ASC). 'Through the Editor's Finder', May 1941, p 221. Concern expressed that *Citizen Kane's* photographic style might be thoughtlessly duplicated under pressure of producers' demands, in films not given to deep focus.
- Tetzlaff, Teddy; Mellor, William; Edeson, Arthur; O'Connell, L. William; Gaudio, Gaetano; Sparkuhl, Theodor; Milner, Victor; Rosher, Charles. 'Lighting the New Fast Films', February 1939, pp 69-70. Milner the only one of the contributors at the time considering

- the use of small f-stops and high light levels for crisper, deeper focus. Milner may not have ever made a deep focus film, though Edison did so with *The Maltese Falcon*.
- Toland, Gregg (ASC). 'Practical Gadgets Expedite Camera Work', May 1939, pp 215-18. Description of basher lights, hydraulic tripod, remote follow focus, dolly and track system developed by Toland.
- Toland, Gregg (ASC). 'Realism for "Citizen Kane"', February 1941. Missing from Northwestern University collection. Not Consulted.
- Toland, Gregg (ASC). 'Using Lights for Lighting Monochrome', December 1941, pp 558-9, 588. Information on filming *Citizen Kane* and *Ball of Fire*.
- Westerberg, J. F. (ASC). 'Size of Image, As a Guide to Depth of Focus in Cinematography', June 1932, p 15. Some basic rules of thumb as to depth of field in relation both to image size, lens focal length, and subject distance from camera.

Popular Photography:

- Goldberg, Norman. 'Shop Talk: Is Lens Focusing Pathé?' November 1970, pp 60, 62, 128. Information on recent oscillating film gate camera patent, similar in principle to Electroplane camera.
- Toland, Gregg (ASC). 'I Broke the Rules in "Citizen Kane"', June 1941, pp 55, 90-1. A popularised article on the techniques Toland used in filming *Citizen Kane*, it is nevertheless quite informative, especially with regard to Welles' desires.

Newspapers:

The New York Times:

- 'Gregg Toland, 44, Cameraman, Dies' 'Pictorial Supervisor of Many Leading US Films - He Began on Coast at 15', Wednesday, September 29, 1948, Section 2, p 30. Vital statistics of life, development of deep focus, plans for 'ultimate focus' lens at time of death, work on *Citizen Kane*, etc. Much confused terminology related to deep focus.
- Brady, Thomas. 'Peace Comes to "The Little Foxes"', Sunday, June 22, 1941, Section 9, p 4. Notation of Toland's extreme disappointment in not being to film *How Green Was My Valley*, due to delays caused by Bette Davis-William Wyler row.
- Crowther, Bosley. 'John Ford's Odyssey' 'In "The Long Voyage Home" He Presents a Brooding Drama of Wanderlust', October 9, 1940, p 30. Note taken of Toland's 'splendid photography'.
- Crowther, Bosley. 'The Screen in Review: Orson Welles' Controversial "Citizen Kane" Proves a Sensational Film at Palace', Friday, May 2, 1941, section 1, p 25. Unusual inclusion of Toland's name in the credits at the beginning of the article. Crowther emphasised that Toland's contributions should not be overlooked.
- Crowther, Bosley. 'The Ambiguous "Citizen Kane"' 'Orson Welles, In His First Motion Picture, Creates a Titanic Character Which Does Everything But Explain Itself', Sunday, May 4, 1941. Section 5, p 1. Elaboration of preceding article. Notes important contribution of Toland, notes use of camera as commentator as well as recorder. Crowther's objections to the method of story telling seem little different from his objections to films of twenty years later.
- Crowther, Bosley. 'The Screen in Review: "The Little Foxes"', Full of Evil, Reaches the Screen of the Music Hall', Friday, August 22, 1941, p 19. Noted aid of Toland in telling story by means of sharp focus, and hard, realistically textured images.

- 72 Jacobs, Lewis. 'Watching Ford Go By' 'The Toughest Director is Seen at Work on "The Long Voyage Home";' Sunday, May 26, 1940, Section 9, p 4. Information on Ford-Toland filming practices.
- Nugent, Frank S. 'The Screen in Review: Twentieth Century Fox Shows a Flawless Film Edition of John Steinbeck's "The Grapes of Wrath" With Henry Fonda and Jane Darwell, at the Rivoli', Thursday, January 25, 1940, p 17. Noted Ford's use of camera as 'reportage and editorial and dramatisation by turns or all in one'. Comparison with work of Russian realists.
- Nugent, Frank S. 'About "The Grapes of Wrath", Twentieth Century Fox's Magnificent Film of the Steinbeck Novel Becomes a Testament to the Power of the Screen', Sunday, January 28, 1940, section 9, p 5. Elaboration of preceding review. Toland mentioned as having 'photographed it so beautifully. . . .'

FOCUS ON FILM

MORE THAN JUST ANOTHER FILM MAGAZINE MUCH MORE

FOCUS ON FILM zealously documents the film scene past and present in the belief that accurate facts are a necessary pre-requisite of film appreciation. Copies are designed to be kept for reference as parts of an encyclopaedia of largely neglected aspects of film history. *FOCUS ON FILM* tries to be intelligent and entertaining as well. Issue No. 9 (March 1972) is scheduled to include :

CLINT EASTWOOD: the first fully detailed career survey of a star whose work is becoming increasingly significant. **CHARLIE RUGGLES:** an appreciation of an outstanding character actor. **SUSANNAH YORK:** a candid interview. **UNDER THE RED ROBE:** an appreciation of Sjöström's last film as a director, now available on 16mm. **MEMOIRS OF A FILM-SPENT YOUTH:** historian William K. Everson on cinemas of the Thirties and Forties. **PLUS** reviews of new films including *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* and *Kotch* with career details of their leading artists.

Copies 30p (\$1.25) from film bookshops or by post (35p/\$1.25) from THE TANTIVY PRESS, 108 New Bond Street, London W1Y 0QX.

(All back issues, including JOHN FORD special, still available.)

Some comments on Patrick Ogle's article
by Christopher Williams

The erudition of Patrick Ogle's article, and its relative sensitivity to aesthetic questions, should not be allowed to obscure the operation of two major terms which he omits entirely from his considerations on deep focus cinematography. These two terms are Ideology and Economy.

The making of *Citizen Kane* constituted a major coming together of technological practice and aesthetic choice in an environment highly conducive to creativity. [Ogle].

But technological practice and aesthetic choice are neither of them independent of ideological economic choices and practices; they are not endowed with autonomous, independent existences of their own unless we choose so to endow them.

This point is all the more important in that deep focus cinematography has traditionally been seen as the technological justification for the Ideology of Realism in the cinema. In its aspiration to be 'true to life' (or, if possible, more true to life than life itself) the cinema had always been cruelly thwarted by the inadequacies of technological development and the unnatural practices of some schools of production. At last deep focus came; in combination with the Ideology of Realism it allowed the cinema to fulfil its true vocation. In the words of the *American Cinematographer* (quoted by Patrick Ogle): 'we forget we are looking at a picture, and feel the living, breathing presence of the characters'.¹

This area is beginning to be theorised by the intellectual workers of *Cahiers du Cinema* (among others), in a series of articles beginning in number 229 (May 1971), and continuing up to and beyond the time of writing.² It would seem useful to make a preliminary summarisation of some of these arguments, because they have immediate application: (a) to the questions of film technology which Ogle rightly wishes to see studied, but to which he seems to bring a very inadequate theoretical perspective; (b) to film study in Britain, enmeshed as it is in the problems of realism and in the particular forms of realism of the British cinema; (c) more particularly, to the serious study of the history of the cinema, to the ideologies which have informed it and the techniques which have underpinned those ideologies. One might add: to the economies which have stood in relation to ideologies and techniques, and to the aesthetics which have elaborated themselves in the interstices of the relationship economy/ideology/technique.

In his *Technique and Ideology: Camera, Perspective, Depth of Field* J.-L. Comolli criticises the perspective of an autonomous technology of the cinema or a history of cinema constructed in terms of technical development – one new invention after the other;

- proposes that the ideology of the cinema, in ‘primitive’ times as in the age of deep focus, has almost always enshrined the notion that reality could be reproduced, recaptured in film, and that in these terms these aims constituted both the supposed ‘novelty’ and the artistic justification of the cinema;

- criticises the tendency of writers on the cinema to single out the camera as representative of the technical processes at work in the production of a film, reducing the other, less ‘visible’ elements to secondary roles – but remarks that such a reduction is entirely consistent with the reality-ideology and the (ideological) conviction that ‘reality’ is made manifest in the visible world;

- establishes the cinema as a product of, and reproductive of, the code of humanist perspective established in the Quattrocento and dominating Western painting for some five hundred years. It was just at that moment that painters lost their belief in the codes and techniques of this two-dimensional representation in which the third dimension is represented by Perspective, that photography, and then the cinema, came to re-establish the code (code of homogeneity and continuity);

- points out that far from necessarily enhancing the supposed ‘realism’ of film – in the sense of a homogeneous, continuous monocular perception – deep focus cinematography can often produce a space that is composite and composed, fragmentary and discontinuous, heavily coded (numerous examples from *Citizen Kane*).

It is by a re-reading of Bazin – and particularly the text *The evolution of cinematographic language, The myth of total cinema*, and *William Wyler or the Jansenist of mise-en-scène* – that Comolli substantiates the naive, mythical but heavily buttressed vision of film as a ‘window’ on the ‘world’. In Jean Mitry, apparently an opponent of Bazin in that Mitry recognises the radical difference of the film object and the ‘real’ object of perception, Comolli discerns merely another face of the Bazinian coin: Mitry, utterly devoted to technicity, and seeing only the cinema-frame, suspended as it were in space, without referents, and particularly without referring to the place of the spectator in the filmic process, ends by establishing a relatively closed formalism from which all real conflict is barred. For all its idealist and quasi-religious assimilations, Bazin’s discourse is preferable to Mitry’s, in that its very obvious contradictions, if blown open and followed up, can suggest new approaches to a materialist history of the cinema. Bazin at least ‘thought’ the cinema, ‘read’ it as productive of meaning.

There is no linear progression of technical devices, any more than there is a linear progression of individual films, and the history/theory of the cinema cannot be built on either. Close-up, tracking shot, deep focus: in their nudity or in a generalised form these elements of the technical vocabulary have no purchase in theoretical terms. They have no given meaning and no neutral, purely 'technical' status. They acquire and produce meaning from the contexts in which they are placed. These contexts only partially cinematographical: Economic and Ideological.

Comolli proceeds to analyse depth of field in this light and as productive of meaning, as a *pratique signifiante* (literally, 'signifying practice'). He points out that in the early cinema the image was more or less automatically a deep one, largely because the first great popularity of the cinema was based in its life-likeness, ie its ability to reproduce mechanically an image corresponding to the 'natural' perception of the human eye (cf. *Arrival of a train at La Ciotat station*). With this 'primitive' depth came perspective and with perspective came a number of codes and modes of depiction that were not in the least primitive, having been developed over several hundred years in painting, in the theatre, and in the fiction-story: the codes of representation. Combinations of these codes governed American and European cinema until very recently. Depth of field, though, would seem to have disappeared in the mid-twenties, to make its 'triumphal re-entry' with Toland in 1941. Like Ogle, Comolli links this 'disappearance' with the introduction of panchromatic film stock, but he makes the point that the ideological (and commercial) justification for panchromatic film was that it was more sensitive than orthochromatic and thus provided an *increase in realism*, specifically in terms of the faces of actors (less elaborate make-up needed than for ortho) and of the range of colours it could reproduce in the spectrum black-grey-white. The cinema was thus able to compete with the realism of magazine photo-journalism, which had been using panchromatic for some years. Why, then, was there no pressure for depth of field in the Hollywood cinema in the period before 1941? Comolli suggests that any pressure that there might have been was in fact outweighed by the predominant pressure/ideology/practice of the time, which was in fact the practice of making films in studios, for economic and historical reasons, and for 'technical perfection' which he elevates into an ideology in its own right. The majority of exterior scenes were shot in studio sets; where real exteriors were used (in some Westerns and adventure films) they figured more as elements of decor, like theatrical backcloths. Comolli sees this trait of the genre picture as being the only residue of 'nature' that the Hollywood production system could allow to remain in its films.

Between the lines of Comolli's articles, with their emphasis on realism and the realistic pretensions of the cinema, one can

76 read an implied interrogation of narrative cinema. ('A real story about real people filmed in the places where it really happened'). The interrogation is formulated polemically in three articles by Pascal Bonitzer. Like Comolli, Bonitzer criticises Bazin and Mitry for their idealism and technicity, and picks out the notion of close-up. The close-up has no intrinsic, technical meaning in its own right, but in terms of narrative cinema and conventional scenography it has the practical effect of fragmenting the flow, the supposed 'naturalness' of a classical cinema discourse, or at any rate of 'standing in' for the principle of discontinuity. From discontinuity can come thought, the active presence and work of the spectator, or 'reader' of the cinema.

We shall return to these articles, since the areas and problems they begin to articulate are of manifest importance to readers of *Screen*. Whether or not one agrees that the principal artistic practice of the classical American cinema derives from an ideology of naturalism – and my own feeling is that it does, but that this ideology has been mediated through a series of aesthetics that are not necessarily naturalistic in practice – the said cinema is in decline, and a new one appearing. The first virtue of the *Cahiers* texts is to remind us of the presence and activity of ideology within technique, and to warn us of the redundancy of any discourse on technique that presents its discoveries in hypostasised, fetishistic terms.³

Notes

1. The distinction Patrick Ogle makes between 'the general concept of realism' and 'this conveyed sense of present' (in *Citizen Kane*) does not seem to be a clear one. What is the general concept of realism?
2. Jean-Louis Comolli, *Technique et Ideologie: Camera, Perspective, Profondeur de Champ*, in Nos. 229 (May-June 1971), 230 (July 1971), 231 (August-September 1971), 233 (November 1971), and continuing; Pascal Bonitzer, '*Réalité*' de la *dénotation*, No. 229, *Le gros orteil*, No. 232 (October 1971), *Fetichisme de la technique: la notion de plan*, No. 233.
3. Cf. for example: 'What emerges most strongly from these disparate threads is Mizoguchi's skill in evoking sudden, startling images to convey the essence of a sequence, expressed here in some particularly luscious travelling shots and crane movements. The summery setting for the Musashino country house is lovingly rendered, with its hot, dusty roads, willowy river banks and the ever-present water; the first time we see the cousin coming down the road is masterly both as an image and in its timing; and the whole thunderstorm sequence has a splendid sensual feeling'. (National Film Theatre programme note.) This text seems to express a clear relationship between realism and private property.

FILMS ON T.V.

by Edward Buscombe

Screen Pamphlet 1 is a carefully researched study, commissioned by UNESCO, of the factors governing the selection of films shown on British television, and the assumptions which lie behind television programmes on the cinema in this country.

Cost: 25p plus 2½p postage.

To: S.E.F.T. 63 Old Compton Street, London W.1

Please send me copies of **FILMS ON T.V.** I enclose my cheque/P.O. for

Name

Address

.....

SYMPOSIUM 1

Published 1971 by the S.W. Lancs Screen Education Group and Edge Hill College of Education, Ormskirk. A practical publication which offers descriptions and analysis of: teaching experience in a primary school; running a film club; using television creatively; a school-made documentary, and recommended films for viewing.

Cost: 15p per copy (plus 2½p post)

To: S.E.F.T. 63 Old Compton Street, London W.1

Please send me copies of **SYMPOSIUM 1.** I enclose my Cheque/P.O. for

Name

Address

.....

SPECIAL OFFER TO STUDENTS

30% DISCOUNT for Student Members of **Seft**

Only £1.25 per year for . . .

- 4 numbers of SCREEN
- 4 numbers of SCREEN EDUCATION NOTES
- reduced fees to **Seft** Day Schools, Courses, Conferences, Residential Summer School
- reduced rates for bulk orders for back numbers of SCREEN

I wish to become a student member of 'The Society for Education in Film and Television' and enclose a cheque/money order/postal order for £1.25.

Name

Address

.....

.....

To be completed by a member of staff at the student's educational institution:

I verify that is a student

at and will complete

his course by

Signature..... Position.....

Martha Kapos

Realism in any simple sense has long been considered a dead letter in painting. The aesthetic revolution brought to a head just after the turn of the century by Picasso and Braque thoroughly exploded the notion of the reproduction of reality as an aim for art, and recent investigation of the schematic structure of pictures by Gombrich and others has now cast doubt on the same enterprise even as a possibility. But, even as early as the 1880s and 90s painters had become too aware of the tendency of paint as pure colour and crude material to adhere to the surface of the picture to imagine that it could be made to behave submissively like the deep space or three dimensional objects of their visual experience. With every intention of being 'humble' in front of nature Cezanne was still forced instead to make reality behave – to distort his bottles and fruit and to tilt his illusions of space forward – because, as Picasso said later, 'the objects have to put up with the picture'. Once the nature of picture-making as organising a flat surface was recognised as a 'demand' on the painter, no easy accommodation with the contradictory demands of the visual appearance of reality seemed possible.

According to current critical opinion; in particular, ideas given circulation by Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried, the incompatibility of painting and the illusion of reality has led to complete divorce.

Roughly speaking the history of painting from Manet through Synthetic Cubism and Matisse may be characterised in terms of the gradual withdrawal of painting from the task of representing reality . . . in favour of an increasing preoccupation with the problems intrinsic to painting itself.

The irreducible essence of pictorial art consists in but two constitutive conventions or norms: flatness and the delimitation of flatness; . . . the observance of merely these two norms is enough to create an object which can be experienced as a picture. (M. Fried.)¹

Ever so many factors thought to be essential to the making and experiencing of art have been shown not to be so by the fact that Modernist art has been able to dispense with them and yet continue to provide the experience of art in all its essentials. (Clement Greenberg.)²

The essence of this view is that painting itself can provide a primary visual experience. Disillusionment with representing external reality, according to Fried and Greenberg, has led to an attitude towards painting itself as the only reality with which the

80 painter should properly be concerned and from which secondary references to other modes of experience have gradually and rightly been pared away. The alternatives posited here are between an idea of painting assumed to be a literal reproduction of reality or, since this is impossible, an idea of painting without extension beyond itself along any referential paths whatsoever. Both alternatives imply that a merely second hand relationship to objects is surpassed and that we confront the thing itself – whether it is in the belief that painting is like a transparent window looking onto nature or whether it is itself a prime object. Both are forms of realism.

Linda Nochlin* subscribes to this interpretation of the history of modern art in her account of the nineteenth century Realism. The first hint of what is to come appears in the first chapter when she mentions the 1969 Art of the Real exhibition at the Tate and the Museum of Modern Art in New York as the latest manifestation of a long standing philosophical tradition distinguishing reality as essence from reality as appearance. Later in the book the theme is taken up again when Miss Nochlin discusses the breaking up of the Realist Movement in the 1880s and 90s and the beginnings of modernism. The 1880s marked a crisis point in the history of Realism: Pissaro and Renoir were giving up Impressionism as a perceptual method; Monet was admitting to severe difficulties; and a number of other painters were beginning to appear on the scene under Impressionist auspices – Van Gogh, Gauguin and Cezanne whose work bore little relation to a literal illusion of reality. What she sees as the pivot of the change is what she calls the 'transvaluation of realist values'.

To be a Realist in the '50s and '60s implied a particular social and moral stance. Traditionally the subject matter of an ambitious painter was understood to be concerned with social or religious ideas interpreted through the use of ideal examples taken from mythology, the Bible or history. But by the middle of the nineteenth century for a whole section of society history was no longer a matter of heroes or kings or ideal experience, but of the ordinary experience of individuals and the social importance of their world. Partly in response to a changed definition of history and partly in response to Establishment pressure: (the comment of Count Nieuwerkerke, Superintendent of Fine Arts, was liable to be 'This is the painting of Democrats, of those who don't change their linen and who want to put themselves above men of the world. This painting displeases and disgusts me'.) – truth and honesty to one's own perception of the external physical or social world were becoming the catchwords of Realism and even a measure of one's artistic integrity. By the 1870s the Impressionists had put such a strict construction on the notion of truth and sincerity of perception that they could not admit the intervention

* Linda Nochlin, *Realism* (Pelican) £1.10p

of any ideas about picture-making or any sense of relationship with the art of the past. Painting for Monet was a strictly individual contract between the artist and reality: so direct and unmediated that when he was working he was scarcely aware of the difference between light and paint.

The 1880s and '90s dramatically reversed the Realist sense of the priority of reality over art. Maurice Denis in 1890 claimed that before being a representation of *anything*, a painting was 'essentially a flat surface covered with colours arranged in a certain order'. In her 'Epilogue' and in answer to the question that she sets herself: 'Whatever happened to Realism?', Linda Nochlin accounts for the self-conscious formalism of the last part of the century as a switch of direction for realist values – first aimed at nature now at the picture itself. 'Honesty', 'Truth', 'Integrity' which had become slogans of the Realist approach to the external world had become 'transvaluated' to apply to the internal formal structure of the picture; so that the painter approached his formal means: flatness, the shape of the canvas, line, colour, with the same sense of moral imperative that had originally bound the Realist to his social or visual truth. In the same long breath Miss Nochlin quotes artists as various as Gauguin, Matisse, Braque, Mondrian, Klee, Rothko, Newman, to support her contention that:

The demonstration of the artness of art – or even the inherent conflict between the representation of contemporary reality and the reality of the formal means of art themselves . . . could now be achieved straightforwardly; indeed, the demonstration that art is art and nothing more, an independent system of signs having no signified (to borrow the terms of modern linguistics) becomes the business of art. . . .

What I find so weak about this argument is the implication that realism is still with us. *Mutatis mutandis*, Linda Nochlin's interpretation is the twentieth century echo of Courbet in 1861:

Painting is an essentially concrete art and can only consist of the representation of *real and existing* things. It is a completely physical language, the words of which consist of all visible objects; an entity which is abstract, not visible, non-existent, is not within the realm of painting.

Of course, the 'entity which is abstract' in nineteenth century terms means not only the Holy Ghost, angels or putti but every wholesale interpretation, moralising, idealising, romanticising to which the real world had previously been submitted. Courbet was rejecting everything that was not self-evidently material of objective vision and in need of no interpretation, and Linda Nochlin's 'transvaluation of Realist truth' (page 230) to mean 'the moral and ethical establishment of the claim of the "rights" of objects, surfaces, and materials to their own "organic kinds of expres-

One of the contradictory side-effects of the Impressionists' technique for chasing down visual reality was that the raw physical facts of the medium were given a degree of exposure that had never been allowed before; until this point it had still been a conscious part of the artist's enterprise to conceal art with art. To deny the material was something of a model of achievement in itself. But for subsequent generations this new formal awareness was a *fait accompli*, and explicit acknowledgment was obligatory on all subsequent ambitious painting. To interpret this in any way as an extension of Realism, it seems to me, is to muffle the real significance of the change. Impressionism had short-circuited all of the complicated structures for getting reality into painting that had developed since the Renaissance; modelling, drawing, perspective etc were replaced by blobs of colour with an extremely tenuous relationship with objects and space. For the next generation any necessary relationship between painting and any absolute given in visual experience was finished. But when the literal correspondence between painting and visual truth and visual reality was broken, the small coloured forms and flat surface of Impressionism didn't become 'truth' or 'reality' in themselves, they became fiction: raw material to be constructed inventively and imaginatively into anything. This opening up of understanding of how wide the symbolic functions of art could be looks forward to Cubism and Surrealism. To see the development of Modernism as purifying, reducing or narrowing the definition of art as a symbolic system is 'an independent system of signs having no signified' is merely to project backwards into nineteenth century a currently fashionable, critical point of view which is only really appropriate to certain kinds of work produced in America in the '60s.

In all fairness to Linda Nochlin, though, her need to draw a line from the 1880s to 1960 and her reluctance to make the kind of interpretation that would imply that Realism was not only finished as a movement, but that it was finished as a concept seems linked with one of the strongest points of the book: her desire for a unity of view. Instead of treating painting in unilinear fashion in isolation as the history of art, she examines Realism in the widest possible context, looking for common ground with the major preoccupations of science, philosophy and literature. What emerges is a convincingly cohesive picture of the set of beliefs which distinguished nineteenth century Realism from its predecessors. It takes a leap of imagination to appreciate the scope and ambition of nineteenth century science: the faith in the absolute comprehensibility of reality; the belief in the facts as the total content of belief. But the fact that science as it was then understood provided the model for the connection between sensory experience and the actual condition of the physical world made it possible for Monet to believe that reliance on perception alone

Linda Nochlin distinguishes this from

... the contemporary outlook which asserts and demands the absolute independence of the world of art from the world of reality and, indeed, disputes the existence of any single, unequivocal reality at all. We no longer accept any fixed correspondence between the syntax of language, or the notational system of art, and an ideally structured universe (p 15).

But if it can be said that there is no 'fixed correspondence' does this mean that there is no relationship with reality at all? The notion of the absolute independence of art from reality supports her contention that modernism in painting is a kind of alternative realism: an independent reality in itself.

In this context Nelson Goodman's *Languages of Art** is particularly illuminating, because it cuts straight across the lines as they are conventionally drawn separating 'art' and 'reality'. He concludes that if realism in the simple nineteenth century sense has to be thrown overboard, then, if you really go into it, the idea that usually follows – that art is independent from reality – has to go overboard with it. I will come back to this.

Nelson Goodman's book doesn't focus on art in particular. He takes the arts as 'points of departure rather than convergence' for a systematic enquiry into the varieties and functions of symbol systems including diagrams, maps, models, musical notation, scripts, and discursive language as well as painting. But the use of the word 'symbol' or 'language' should not mislead the reader into expecting to find here any glib notion of art as 'communication'. Gombrich, for instance, has stressed (*Art and Illusion*, 1960) that all representations and iconic signs are in need of interpretation; even in cases where, as with a photograph or an example of highly skilled *trompe l'oeil*, we feel that our understanding is being wrenched from us in the most involuntary and monolithic way. Having recognised this he tends to assimilate art to the status of a langue or a code. But when Gombrich takes the relationship as more than a rough analogy, the kind of 'communication' then expected of art has the same unambiguous, straightforward transparency as when we are said to understand a 'statement' or a 'message'. Otherwise, how can we be said to be interpreting the symbols that we use? When abstract art doesn't provide this kind of communication, then, in Gombrich's view, it doesn't 'deserve' to be called a language at all. Of course, Gombrich's antipathy towards abstract art incorporates a prejudice that has grown out of his need to regard art as a language or a code in the first place.

From the understanding that art is a symbol system in need of interpretation, Nelson Goodman proceeds with the utmost caution
*(London) O.U.P., £2.20.

84 to distinguish the specific meaning that 'interpretation' has within each particular system: painting being only one system among many, including language. What interpretation means in each case varies according to the structure of the system in question. An electro-cardiogram differs from a Hokusai drawing of Mt Fujiyama, although the wiggly black lines and white background may be exactly the same, because in the diagram the features that are symbolically relevant are expressly and narrowly restricted. The only relevant features are the coordinates of the points which the line passes through; it doesn't matter what the absolute size of the diagram is or the colour of the paper. In the drawing, these features may be very important; in fact nothing can be ruled out: thickness or thinness of the line, its colour, contrast with background all could potentially be enlisted for symbolic roles. Without implying any prejudice Nelson Goodman compares a picture with an ungraduated thermometer. As opposed to more restricted symbol systems, familiarity with meaning can never be said to be final or complete, nor can the adjustment between symbol and symbolised be real or exhaustive.

But this absence of specificity and differentiation which is characteristic of pictures doesn't mean that they are an 'independent system of signs having no signified' and have no relationship with reality. Only the relationship may not be such as is conventionally supposed. Gombrich has supposed that the painter must match reality within the limitations of his medium. Whether he is concerned with states of mind or the realities of the external world his problem is to find or make a schema which will appear to be a convincing match from within the available alternatives that circumscribe his activity. However, the assumption which Gombrich makes is that the picture is invented to match a world which is presupposed, ready-made on some other natural or primary level of articulation. The artist searches for a symbol that will be most appropriate to the pre-existing context. Nelson Goodman, on the other hand, shows that if the idea of a picture as an idiosyncratic copy of reality is rejected, the implications following from this take one much further than Gombrich seemed willing to go. There is no way in which a symbol can be thought of as 'matching' reality. The concept of a reality mirrored in some kind of independent natural state has already been demolished. *Symbol systems in themselves are the original forms into which the world as we know it is organised. The object in front of which the painter sits down to paint is already a 'way of taking the world'.* 'The making of a picture commonly participates in making what is to be pictured' (p 32). But the process does not necessarily take place in isolation from other symbol systems.

Pictures are no more immune than the rest of the world to the formative force of language even though they themselves, as

symbols, also exert such a force upon the world, including language. Talking does not make the world or even pictures, but talking and pictures participate in making each other and the world as we know them (p 88).

If the significance of a symbol as an invention is fully recognised then it can be seen as a cognitive tool and a means of articulating reality and the notion of the insularity of art however abstract is nonsense.

That nature imitates art is too timid a dictum. Nature is the product of art and discourse (p 33).

References

1. Michael Fried, *Three American Painters*, 1965.
2. Clement Greenberg, *Modernist Painting*, 1965.

NEW LEFT REVIEW EDITIONS

is a political bookclub offering at
reduced prices:

Louis Althusser: *Lenin & Philosophy & other essays* £2.20.

Georg Lukacs: *Lenin* £1.00

Regis Debray: *Conversations with Allende* 70p

Lucien Goldmann: *Immanuel Kant* £1.95

Alfred Schmidt: *The Concept of Nature in Marx* £2.20

Ernest Mandel: *The Formation of the Economic Thought of Karl Marx* £1.50 and other books.

NEW LEFT REVIEW EDITIONS, 7 CARLISLE STREET, LONDON W1.

please write for a



free introductory copy

Write your name & address here, cut & post this coupon or write a separate letter

name

address

town county

*films
and filming*

ARTILLERY MANSIONS, 75 VICTORIA STREET, LONDON SW1

Éléments pour un Nouveau Cinéma

Louis Marcorelles with the collaboration of Nicol Rouzet-Albagi
(Unesco, Paris, 1970, \$3/£0.90/12F)

Writing in 'Movie 16' on *Weekend* Robin Wood remarked that the achievement of the major Hollywood directors like Hitchcock and Hawks depends on the fact that they have worked within a tradition that shields them from the necessity of full exposure to the modern world. Films like *Psycho* and *Rio Bravo* have an important and continuing relevance, but it is oblique: of their very nature, they avoid direct confrontation with contemporary reality. It will probably not be possible to make good pictures of this kind any more. . . .

Louis Marcorelles goes much further and is much less generous to 'old' cinema: the commercial American cinema is out-of-date, a pure consumer product; Bergman and Fellini are latter day Pagnols and Carnés 'perpetuating a theatrical or essentially plastic cinema, on the fringes of the Hollywood industry (relatively) but already out of fashion'. Against all this, 'direct cinema . . . breaks brutally with the methods of shooting and, conjointly, of narrative which are the only ones recognised till now'.

Antonioni, Bergman, Hitchcock, storytellers *par excellence*, 'illustrate' at best an idea already formulated, a text, conceived within the limits of fiction, whether from the novel (Hitchcock) or theatre (Bergman), a text inheriting several centuries of theatre and novel. . . . Now Leacock, Perrault, Rouch, founding their dramaturgy solely on what is perceived cinematographically, abandon almost completely an inheritance in direct descent from D. W. Griffith.

Marcorelles examines a 'new cinema' which *does* confront reality directly and at the same time communicates its confrontation to the rest of the world. Communication is emphasised: the cinema is 'an opening to other civilisations . . . an incomparable instrument capable of entirely renewing knowledge of existing societies', with 'its capacity to put us in the presence of the world as it really is'. He quotes approvingly both Edgar Morin's 'direct cinema is above all an instrument of communication' and Léon Moussinac's 'the cinema will tell the unity of the world'. In this sense Marcorelles sees the cinema as a political instrument, communicating and demanding participation (comparing Brecht and the Berliner Ensemble and Beck and Living Theatre as 'affirming the need of a more "participatory" art, in close rapport with the society in which we live').

Marcorelles can be confusing. He talks of the cinema discovering

88 'the way things really are' without defining sufficiently what he means or why fiction film could not discover it equally. He talks about reality when he seems to mean actuality. He confuses the new cinema's supposed direct relationship to reality and the new film-makers' direct relationship to his equipment. He is unable to offer convincing counter-arguments to the criticisms that direct cinema must take a subjective view of the actuality it records and that by its presence it alters the nature of that actuality. Speaking of Leacock he offers as fact the debatable point that

the extreme mobility of the camera, sometimes trembling, adds to the intense feeling of participation and therefore identification of the spectator to the characters and the event described. . . .

The intensity of the sensation perceived is the sign of a new perception. . . .

While Marcorelles is right to emphasise the originality of direct cinema, he tends to overstress its break from fiction cinema. For example, while it is true that Leacock begins from actuality (though even this is not quite true of Perrault and Rouch), Leacock says he must make sure that his 'conception of the subject' is at the outset interesting enough. There is nearly always some kind of 'dramatic' structure implicit either in the event filmed itself or in the film-maker's pre-conception of it (or indeed to be imposed at the editing stage, as seems true of the Maysles brothers' *Gimme Shelter*). And for all Marcorelles' talk of 'the everyday' it remains true, in general, as Leacock says, that film-makers need 'high pressure situation' (the example of *Nehru* seems to prove it, for Leacock at least). It is interesting, too, that film-makers like Rouch, Groulx, Kovacs, beginning in direct cinema, have turned to fiction or 'psychodrama'. Marcorelles does not consider here that they may have reached some limits of direct cinema (he simply notes their development with an admiration for the nuances of dialogue and sound in their fiction or semi-fiction work).

The basis of direct cinema is technical: different procedures were made possible by the development of lightweight 16mm cameras capable of shooting with sensitive synchronised sound (though this development came primarily from a need or desire for it). New equipment meant not only that new subjects could be taken on but also that old or new subjects could be treated in a new way. The technical means have aesthetic and ethical implications but remain primarily means. Marcorelles is not content to describe the new means and the new possibilities but tends towards mysticism: direct cinema makes sense only if one uses 16mm . . . even more than a technique, 16mm is a state of mind, the natural respiration of an art revitalised by contact with the real world

See in this issue Christopher Williams' reply to Patrick Ogle's article (p 73): *But Technological practice and aesthetic choice are*

or, later,

by the mediation of man in close contact with machine, breathing as it were with his machine, we establish a new relationship with our little world.

The most important point is much simpler than that. 16mm is important, but because economically and technically it implies an alternative cinema, the possibility of challenging the existing hegemony.

Despite its faults, Marcorelles' study does a useful job in tracing, briefly, but critically, the influences which have gone to stimulate this 'new cinema'—Flaherty, Brecht, Italian neo-realism (though he has some highly questionable things to say about Rossellini and de Sica), Free Cinema and the French New Wave (though he does not mention Rozier's stupendous *Adieu Philippine*). Perhaps the most interesting thing about Marcorelles' argument is its stress on the importance of synchronous sound as, for example, in the sequence of *Primary* in which the Kennedys are on stage and the camera-recorder 'seize, in the movement of the action, the revealing nuance, the sentence or part of a sentence which throws light on a situation or a character, the visual detail inseparable from its sound context', opposing this to the inauthenticity of commercial cinema. Part of the reason why Marcorelles seems so often to go to extremes in his arguments is that he has conceived his study as deliberately provocative, as a polemic to initiate a debate. It is a debate we must join in but we would be able to do so more effectively if we had greater access to the necessary films like Solanas' *La Hora de los Hornos*, Quebec films by Perrault and Groulx, Frederick Wiseman's films, more Rouch. . . .

Jim Hillier

Films on TV, Edward Buscombe
(SCREEN Pamphlet I, 25p)

This is the first in a planned series of SCREEN pamphlets on aspects of film and television. It is a UNESCO report on the transmission of cinema films on television and some commentary on television programmes about the cinema, such as BBC's *Film night* and ITV's *Cinema*. It contains useful suggestions on how the organisation of this important element of the television companies' work could be improved.

Perhaps the most general value of the pamphlet is that it provides detailed ammunition for the struggle to reform the structure and aims of the media in Britain. Much of the dissatisfaction expressed with the present structure and the plans that have been advanced for the future of television is a belated recognition that particu-

or, later,

by the mediation of man in close contact with machine, breathing as it were with his machine, we establish a new relationship with our little world.

The most important point is much simpler than that. 16mm is important, but because economically and technically it implies an alternative cinema, the possibility of challenging the existing hegemony.

Despite its faults, Marcorelles' study does a useful job in tracing, briefly, but critically, the influences which have gone to stimulate this 'new cinema'—Flaherty, Brecht, Italian neo-realism (though he has some highly questionable things to say about Rossellini and de Sica), Free Cinema and the French New Wave (though he does not mention Rozier's stupendous *Adieu Philippine*). Perhaps the most interesting thing about Marcorelles' argument is its stress on the importance of synchronous sound as, for example, in the sequence of *Primary* in which the Kennedys are on stage and the camera-recorder 'seize, in the movement of the action, the revealing nuance, the sentence or part of a sentence which throws light on a situation or a character, the visual detail inseparable from its sound context', opposing this to the inauthenticity of commercial cinema. Part of the reason why Marcorelles seems so often to go to extremes in his arguments is that he has conceived his study as deliberately provocative, as a polemic to initiate a debate. It is a debate we must join in but we would be able to do so more effectively if we had greater access to the necessary films like Solanas' *La Hora de los Hornos*, Quebec films by Perrault and Groulx, Frederick Wiseman's films, more Rouch. . . .

Jim Hillier

Films on TV, Edward Buscombe
(SCREEN Pamphlet I, 25p)

This is the first in a planned series of SCREEN pamphlets on aspects of film and television. It is a UNESCO report on the transmission of cinema films on television and some commentary on television programmes about the cinema, such as BBC's *Film night* and ITV's *Cinema*. It contains useful suggestions on how the organisation of this important element of the television companies' work could be improved.

Perhaps the most general value of the pamphlet is that it provides detailed ammunition for the struggle to reform the structure and aims of the media in Britain. Much of the dissatisfaction expressed with the present structure and the plans that have been advanced for the future of television is a belated recognition that particu-

90 larly significant sections of the public have no way of presenting themselves on television. Their views are either attacked at third hand by the medium's pundits, who aim for what they suppose to be a consensual stance (thereby *defining* the supposed consensus), or are assumed to be known from some other source; a distorted version of them are then bombarded by those same pundits. Here, the familiar journalistic penchants for misrepresentation, ridicule, 'straw-man-ism', reductionism and presenting one's point of view in the form of a dictatorially unchallenged monologue, are used to conceal the snobbery and philistinism which frequently seem the principal characteristic of the stance of some of television's chief mediators.

This anti-intellectualism reflects a condescension toward both the medium and the public. The position is most clearly felt by political minorities, but it is also clear that developments in criticism, ideas and important areas of the intellectual life of the nation are treated similarly. A remark towards the end of the pamphlet exemplifies this:

. . . when great arguments are taking place about the aesthetics, and indeed the purpose, of the cinema, there ought surely to be a television programme which reflects this, and reflects upon it. (p42).

The first SCREEN pamphlet explores in detail such a case in the chapter 'TV programmes about the cinema', where a close look at *Film night* and the role of resident expert played by Philip Jenkinson reveals how individuals are responsible for the working of this process.

. . . What is open to attack is Mr Jenkinson's attitude to film criticism and to ideas about the cinema. He is not very interested, it is clear, but he knows just enough to make fun of it. (p39).

It is one of the most valuable functions of television criticism to discuss examples of particular programmes in this detailed way. Edward Buscombe hits on a common attitude in television circles when he refers to the 'camp' *Film night* approach to its material.

The cinema of the past is explored not to reveal its artistry or its sociological interest, but because it can provide a few easy laughs or a twinge of nostalgia. (p41)

The value of the pamphlet lies in its combination of a study of the organisational and technical restraints (cost of films, limitation on foreign material shown, 'package' buying of films, quality of image in transfer from cinema to TV, use of categories of suitability for various time-slots, etc) with a critical commentary on the consequences;

It must be obvious to anyone who reflects upon it, that the way in which television companies actually schedule the films they buy

must have a far-reaching effect upon the way the films are received. (p23)

91

His style of writing is precise, simple and functional, and the approach flows naturally into a list of suggestions in the 'Conclusion'. Here the author indicates the priorities of the report; to promote the 'acceptance of the cinema as a legitimate art-form', or like his colleague Peter Wollen, to see TV as potentially instrumental in creating 'an informed and enthusiastic public of cinephiles, a rich film culture' (*Signs and Meaning in the Cinema*, p158). It is not, therefore, his purpose to make a detailed critique of the television companies' programme policies or to elucidate the ideological and sociological factors responsible for the apparent contempt or ignorance in which the serious appreciation of the cinema is held – although these underpin almost all of the constraints which determine programme planning. As Edward Buscombe observes, this is frequently rationalised by reference to an exclusive field of 'televisual material'; the contradictions inherent in one such claim are carefully dissected and shown to be false, and the consequent emphasis on parades of superstars à la popular press is touched upon (in reference to *Film night*, again);

It always seems more important that the person invited should be well-known as a television performer than that he should have anything new or interesting to say. Yet there are quite a few well-qualified people in this country with things of importance to say about films and who are never heard on television (pp41-2)

What television is in fact doing here is 'merely reflecting the industry's own view of itself' (p48), which is only partly explained by the dependence of television programmes on material from the film distributors, leading to a public-relations function of promoting forthcoming releases. He suggests that TV could take on the responsibility for securing a more serious public response to film, which is a role abdicated by the film industry itself (and largely, it might be added, the Press too). That this appears unrealistic is itself an indictment of the way all sides of the mass communications industry reflect each other . . . the evidence seems to suggest that TV has deliberately copied the Press in this area for want of a less consensually confined model of action.

Edward Buscombe's nine proposals, the emphasis of which is on promoting greater adventurousness and independence on the part of the television companies, a greater awareness of and respect for film art, the production of programmes providing serious critical analysis of the cinema as an art form and a responsibility for keeping records of major works of the cinema of the past, are both worthwhile and have the pragmatic element of being capable of being put into immediate operation. This kind of study of an area of mass communications which is small, but symptomatic of

92 other areas, is what is urgently needed if the industry is to be reformed, and the pamphlet is very welcome. As it happens, the author's closing remarks accurately represent the real implications of his report:

This (suggestions) doesn't sound like too much to ask. Unfortunately it is asking for a revolution. (p62)

Ashley Pringle

The Citizen Kane Book, Pauline Kael
(Secker and Warburg, £6)

Pauline Kael is certainly remarkable. Without ever having produced a single piece of writing longer than the 80 page essay which forms the introduction to this book, she can be called by the *Times Literary Supplement* 'a better film critic than anybody else . . . a great critic, in fact'. While such a judgment must amaze those who have read her previous work, it is possible to see why she excites the admiration of some. Miss Kael makes a speciality out of pricking the pretensions of the Hollywood movie. Her earlier collections of reviews were based on the assertion that if art was to be found in the cinema, then it must be sought not in the American cinema but in the (happily named) 'art' film. Hollywood is, of course, supreme at producing entertainment, but this is 'merely' enjoyable: the guilty pleasure of slumming, which Miss Kael is always honest enough to admit she gives way to. Miss Kael's criticism depends heavily upon this distinction between enjoyment and aesthetic value. A curious kind of puritanism runs through all her writing. 'Art' is hard, noble, and yet at times just a little boring. 'Entertainment' has all the allure of a secret vice. So, comparing silent pictures (which were 'aesthetically pure') with early talkie comedies, she writes, 'I think that many of us enjoyed these comedies more, even though we may not have felt very secure about the aesthetic grounds for our enjoyment'. She quite fails to see that there must be something wrong with a view of art that cannot accommodate enjoyment.

Miss Kael's view of *Citizen Kane* is in keeping with what she has written before. It is, she says, a 'shallow masterpiece'. That is to say, she concedes what is undeniable, the power of the film, but denies it profundity because its psychology is unconvincing. She says: 'It is both a limitation and in the nature of the appeal of popular art that it constructs false, easy patterns'. (The falsity of *Kane* apparently resides in the fact that in real life William Randolph Hearst was not lonely, did not have any early traumas and was not deserted by his mistress, who, incidentally, was Marion Davies and so was not talentless. All this information seems to do is to support Welles' contention, which Miss Kael

92 other areas, is what is urgently needed if the industry is to be reformed, and the pamphlet is very welcome. As it happens, the author's closing remarks accurately represent the real implications of his report:

This (suggestions) doesn't sound like too much to ask. Unfortunately it is asking for a revolution. (p62)

Ashley Pringle

The Citizen Kane Book, Pauline Kael
(Secker and Warburg, £6)

Pauline Kael is certainly remarkable. Without ever having produced a single piece of writing longer than the 80 page essay which forms the introduction to this book, she can be called by the *Times Literary Supplement* 'a better film critic than anybody else . . . a great critic, in fact'. While such a judgment must amaze those who have read her previous work, it is possible to see why she excites the admiration of some. Miss Kael makes a speciality out of pricking the pretensions of the Hollywood movie. Her earlier collections of reviews were based on the assertion that if art was to be found in the cinema, then it must be sought not in the American cinema but in the (happily named) 'art' film. Hollywood is, of course, supreme at producing entertainment, but this is 'merely' enjoyable: the guilty pleasure of slumming, which Miss Kael is always honest enough to admit she gives way to. Miss Kael's criticism depends heavily upon this distinction between enjoyment and aesthetic value. A curious kind of puritanism runs through all her writing. 'Art' is hard, noble, and yet at times just a little boring. 'Entertainment' has all the allure of a secret vice. So, comparing silent pictures (which were 'aesthetically pure') with early talkie comedies, she writes, 'I think that many of us enjoyed these comedies more, even though we may not have felt very secure about the aesthetic grounds for our enjoyment'. She quite fails to see that there must be something wrong with a view of art that cannot accommodate enjoyment.

Miss Kael's view of *Citizen Kane* is in keeping with what she has written before. It is, she says, a 'shallow masterpiece'. That is to say, she concedes what is undeniable, the power of the film, but denies it profundity because its psychology is unconvincing. She says: 'It is both a limitation and in the nature of the appeal of popular art that it constructs false, easy patterns'. (The falsity of *Kane* apparently resides in the fact that in real life William Randolph Hearst was not lonely, did not have any early traumas and was not deserted by his mistress, who, incidentally, was Marion Davies and so was not talentless. All this information seems to do is to support Welles' contention, which Miss Kael

ridicules, that the film is not a straight biography of Hearst.) The whole direction of this kind of criticism is to open up arguments which some people might have thought were settled. In spite of the fact that *Kane* was again top of the poll in *Sight and Sound's* decennial publication of critics' ten favourite movies, Miss Kael still holds to the belief that the American film most universally held to be a masterpiece does not approach *La Règle du Jeu*, *Rashomon* or *Man of Aran*. Secondly, movies must apparently be judged by the criteria applied to novels and plays; that is to say, they must have psychologically dense characterisations. And thirdly, they must be 'true to life'. It is surely a little depressing to find Miss Kael so resolutely sticking to her big guns of high culture, good taste, psychological truth and verisimilitude; but what is more depressing is that anyone should consider this 'great' criticism.

These attitudes are, however, only assumptions and are not really argued through. The heart of the essay Miss Kael writes is an attack upon Welles' stature as an artist, and beyond this, an attack on the auteur theory. *The Citizen Kane Book* is in three parts: the essay comes first, followed by the shooting script, and then the cutting continuity. This material is, of course, enormously useful. But is it printed with a particular purpose in mind, and that is to show that the true author of *Citizen Kane* is Herman Mankiewicz. Miss Kael sets about proving this assumption by, first of all, rehabilitating Hollywood comedy of the thirties. This is fair enough; doubtless many films from this era have been unjustly neglected (though many have received ample praise). However, it is part of Miss Kael's technique as a critic that she cannot praise one thing without damning another, especially if it has been previously taken up by 'college students' or film buffs, both of which groups she heartily distrusts. So, though comedy of the thirties is good, that which has received praise, such as the films of Lubitsch or Hawks, is not—or at least, not much. Next in her line of argument comes the discovery that many of the best comedies were written by Herman Mankiewicz. It only remains to assert that *Kane* is the 'culmination' of thirties comedy and the circuit is complete: Mankiewicz *must* be the author. And, hey presto, the script is produced to clinch it.

The weak link in the chain is fairly clear. Is *Kane* really a thirties comedy? Certainly much of it is funny; but this isn't what is meant. What Miss Kael appears to be getting at is that the film betrays an astonishing slickness of style and, what is more, revels in its slickness. Some of Miss Kael's remarks are very penetrating, and none more so than her insight that the film enjoys displaying to the audience the dexterity with which it is put together. She is quite right; *Kane* is a film made by a show-off, a show-off of genius. But what she means in describing it as a thirties comedy is that the film is no more than the sum of its script. Now, she cer-

tainly has a case when talking about many of the films of the decade before *Kane*. No doubt they were often conceived almost wholly in script terms, and it has always been a weakness of the auteur theory that it did not sufficiently allow that the director might not always be the auteur, and that movies are in any case a co-operative art. But Miss Kael's view is that the director is a kind of chairman, that his function is essentially a neutral one. ('The best interpretation to put on it when a director says that a movie is totally his is . . . not that he was the sole creator but almost the reverse—that he was free to use all the best ideas offered him'.) So, although it could not be denied that Welles had an enormous influence on *Kane*, his contribution was not so much a creative as an organisational and entrepreneurial one.

There are two objections to this, and both reflect upon the auteur theory, at least as it is commonly understood. The first is this: it may well be that Herman Mankiewicz made a great contribution to the picture, that he was responsible both for the decision to make a film based upon Hearst and for the shape and much of the detail of the subsequent film. Yet every other page of this book belies the claim that he is the real auteur, for together with the text go a large number of excellent stills—not studio publicity releases, as so many are, but frame stills which make up for their inevitable lack of quality by their close relevance to the text. The tremendous power of these images testify to Welles' genius as a director; for where, in any other Mankiewicz film, is to be found such visual force? It is here that the real weakness of the whole argument lies, in the visual dimension. Miss Kael is committed to the view that the writer is responsible for what is valuable in the Hollywood movie. She cannot avoid, however, at least paying lip-service to the film's magnificently controlled images; but in case we should be tempted to give Welles some of the credit for this she introduces Gregg Toland. 'I think he not only provided much of the visual style of *Citizen Kane* but was responsible for affecting the conception, and even for introducing a few elements that are not in the script'. Now, Miss Kael is quite right in her contention that *Kane* owes much to German expressionism. She has at least avoided the trap that Bazin fell into, of believing that deep-focus photography must *essentially* be more 'realistic', since it reduced the importance of editing. The photography of *Kane* is indeed expressionist, and about as 'unrealistic' as is possible to be. And there is an ingenious discovery of a film *Mad Love* which was directed by Karl Freund (of *Dr Caligari*), photographed by Toland and had Peter Lorre parading as a kind of Ur-Kane, complete with bald plate. But does this prove that the visual style of *Kane* is Toland?

It does not; for *Mad Love* is a forgotten mediocrity still, and Toland continued on his career as a brilliant cinematographer, not as a director. What this proves is that Toland had great abilities

in putting into effect the requirements of his director, which is what a cameraman is for. But it doesn't prove he was a director, that he ever had his own conception of a film which he could impose on others.*

This brings us to the second way in which one is obliged to object to Miss Kael's special pleading. There is a considerable amount of *a posteriori* evidence to show that Welles is indeed the author of the film. After making *Citizen Kane* Welles went on to make a number of other pictures. Some people feel that he never again reached the heights of his first attempt; but Pauline Kael is surely being a good deal less than straight with her readers when she refuses to consider this evidence at all. Welles' later films are dismissed as 'entertaining thrillers, often, but *mere* thrillers'. If one is seriously to argue that Welles is not truly the auteur of *Kane* one has to produce a pretty convincing reason why *Lady From Shanghai*, *Touch of Evil* or *Mr Arkadin* should be regarded as mere thrillers. It isn't an opinion that can simply be asserted. Miss Kael is to be thanked for bringing to our attention the important role Mankiewicz played in making the picture. But it would take more than eighty pages to demolish Welles' total oeuvre, which is what would be needed to prove her case. And it would take more than Miss Kael.

Edward Buscombe

* See Toland's own comment quoted on p 58 of this issue.

La Mort du Cinema: Film/Revolution,
G. Lenne (Paris, Editions du Cerf, 1971)

Lenne prefaces his discussion of the 'death' of the cinema, and the consequences of this death for the revolutionary movement, with a quotation from *Pierrot le Fou* (1965), 'Je commence à sentir l'odeur de la mort'. Although he does not relate the situation of the cinema to the broader context of art history, it is clear that the phenomenon that he is discussing is closely linked to the sterility of the 'art for art's sake' movement, and the evaluation of the art object totally divorced from its social and political context. In this respect, Jean Gimpel's book *The Cult of Art* provides some useful background information for Lenne's discussion. What preoccupies Lenne above all is what he calls the 'confusing division of man as artist and man as political being'. It is this artificial dichotomy which has brought about the death of the cinema, and it is, the author suggests, only a correctly 'scientific' revolutionary practice which might infuse the corpse with new life.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part, entitled 'Ideology', is concerned with a close analysis of the present, 'deathly' condition of the cinema; the second part 'Science'

in putting into effect the requirements of his director, which is what a cameraman is for. But it doesn't prove he was a director, that he ever had his own conception of a film which he could impose on others.*

This brings us to the second way in which one is obliged to object to Miss Kael's special pleading. There is a considerable amount of *a posteriori* evidence to show that Welles is indeed the author of the film. After making *Citizen Kane* Welles went on to make a number of other pictures. Some people feel that he never again reached the heights of his first attempt; but Pauline Kael is surely being a good deal less than straight with her readers when she refuses to consider this evidence at all. Welles' later films are dismissed as 'entertaining thrillers, often, but *mere* thrillers'. If one is seriously to argue that Welles is not truly the auteur of *Kane* one has to produce a pretty convincing reason why *Lady From Shanghai*, *Touch of Evil* or *Mr Arkadin* should be regarded as mere thrillers. It isn't an opinion that can simply be asserted. Miss Kael is to be thanked for bringing to our attention the important role Mankiewicz played in making the picture. But it would take more than eighty pages to demolish Welles' total oeuvre, which is what would be needed to prove her case. And it would take more than Miss Kael.

Edward Buscombe

* See Toland's own comment quoted on p 58 of this issue.

La Mort du Cinema: Film/Revolution,
G. Lenne (Paris, Editions du Cerf, 1971)

Lenne prefaces his discussion of the 'death' of the cinema, and the consequences of this death for the revolutionary movement, with a quotation from *Pierrot le Fou* (1965), 'Je commence à sentir l'odeur de la mort'. Although he does not relate the situation of the cinema to the broader context of art history, it is clear that the phenomenon that he is discussing is closely linked to the sterility of the 'art for art's sake' movement, and the evaluation of the art object totally divorced from its social and political context. In this respect, Jean Gimpel's book *The Cult of Art* provides some useful background information for Lenne's discussion. What preoccupies Lenne above all is what he calls the 'confusing division of man as artist and man as political being'. It is this artificial dichotomy which has brought about the death of the cinema, and it is, the author suggests, only a correctly 'scientific' revolutionary practice which might infuse the corpse with new life.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part, entitled 'Ideology', is concerned with a close analysis of the present, 'deathly' condition of the cinema; the second part 'Science'

96 posits a revolutionary practice which would finally destroy the old, replacing it with a new cinema. The introduction raises the old question 'What is the Cinema?' and answers it with one word: 'Alienation'. For the cinema, by offering a form of entertainment that is an escape from life, furthers the alienation of man from the conditions of his daily life. Alienation is effected through mystification, and it is the 'mystification of art' that is the subject of the first section.

The mystification of the cinema consists of the fact that it conceals its own function, which is to assist in the universal penetration and acceptance of the ideology of the ruling class. Lenne argues that we should see the 'auteur' not as an artist, but as a *producer*, and that, like other workers, he takes up his place in the 'production-distribution-exploitation circuit'; the only difference between a film and any other consumer product being that the former exploits on an ideological as well as on an economic level. Out of the circuit films are not a solution to the 'exploitation circuit' since these are dependent on the (political) goodwill of a (rich) Maecenas figure. Moreover, in Lenne's view, the cinema of the 'revisionist countries' has not solved the problem, since here too the film has reverted to its function as a money-making product, he cites as an example Bondarchuk's *Waterloo*. However, the solution that he does suggest is that of the PARALLEL CINEMA, and he discusses this as an alternative at some length. Indeed as a posited practical alternative it is a concept that is central to the whole book, and one that may be open to criticism on several counts. The advantage of the 'parallel cinema' is that, in contradistinction to the Capitalist financed entertainment industry, it is financed by anti-bourgeois *syndicats* or parties: an example of this type being the film *La Vie est à Nous*, commissioned from Jean Renoir by the CGT in 1937.

After discussing the possibility of a 'parallel cinema' Lenne goes on to outline the position of the industry in 1970: he draws a parallel between developments in the fifties and those of the sixties. Thus the period 1950-58 is the supremacy of Hollywood, and the period 1958-60 a time of decline and transition; correspondingly, the years 1960-68 disclose the emergence and ascendancy of the *Nouvelle Vague* directors, while 1968-70 sees the death of Hollywood, and the political crisis of the young cinema. The year 1968 is of course, particularly in France, seen as a watershed, and after this time it becomes impossible to ignore the ideological weight of any film. Lenne contrasts the 'bad conscience' of post-1968, with the pre-1968 'state of grace', and he goes on to outline what he sees as the device adopted by the 'official cinema' for recovering from the blow of '68.

Bourgeois ideology is menaced by internal contradictions, and its recovery (from the 'unmasking' of '68) is dependent on the continued concealment of those contradictions. On the principle of 'if

you can't beat them, join them' the official cinema therefore adopts the policy of producing large numbers of 'debate' films – that is, films openly concerned with current social and political controversies. Lenne likens these to the antibodies secreted by an organism for the purpose of counteracting and subduing attack. He offers as archetypes the Cannes prizewinning films of 1969 and 1970: *If*, and *M.A.S.H.* The 'Political Film' emerges as a genre in its own right, and siphons off any actually revolutionary energies or intentions, providing larger than life, and up on the screen, what has been called the 'opportunity for political onanism'. Films like *If* and *Z* are attacked on the grounds that either they caricature and distort real political movements, or they are situated in such strange, exotic or far-away places, as to make it unlikely that the audience will identify with the oppressed who are represented. Thus while allowing for the sincerity, or political integrity of directors like Lindsay Anderson and Costa Gavras, Lenne concludes that they are not clear about the pro-establishment role that they are in fact playing, and that their only alternative is to 'join the ranks of the parallel cinema which is preparing the way for a new resistance'.

Having exploded the *Ideology* of the official cinema, the second part of *La Mort du Cinema* is concerned with defining that *Science* which alone is capable of exploding the prevailing ideology. The first section, entitled 'Towards a Science of Cinema', demands the urgent substitution of a materialist, for an idealist criticism. This 'materialist' criticism sets out to substitute a socio-political frame of reference in place of what Walter Benjamin called 'outmoded concepts such as creativity and genius, eternal value and mystery' (and, one might add, the auteur theory). The need for this new criticism is urgent, for, as is pointed out, cinema studies are increasingly being made official through the creation of departments in the universities. And it is important that this 'new' subject is not used to give birth to mystifications, such as have been created in the past in the quiet backwaters of aesthetic and political re-creation proper departments of 'Fine Art'.

However, despite the search for a 'Science' of cinema, the author is conscious of the fact that this can never be an 'exact science' because of what he calls 'plurisignificance'. Since each film can have a multiplicity of readings or interpretations, there can be no 'codification of meaning' and therefore no exact science. Moreover a distinction is made between the 'meaning' (what the film says) and the 'message' (what the author wanted to say). Frequently the 'message' is only accessible to a small intellectual elite, and the 'meanings' can be contradictory. In the bourgeois cinema, Lenne points out, the contradictory meanings can contribute to the commercial success of the film with the widest possible audience. (A current example, not one used by Lenne, is provided by *The Go-Between*, which presents the aristocratic past as both

98 odious and desirable). The theory of 'plurisignificance' can be used ultimately as an attack on the *cinéma vérité* technique of documentary, for since each scene can be interpreted in a number of ways, it is not enough 'to show in order to demonstrate' (this, by the way, contradicts Bazin's theories of cinematic realism).

From the theory of multiple readings, Lenne proceeds to outline the main task of a scientific/materialist criticism which is to expose the contradictions inherent in the 'ruling cinema'. The critic has to show that the sustaining myths of society – justice, freedom, democracy, etc, are being mythically sustained in the cinema. Equally, he must denounce the supposed 'innocence' of the 'Hollywood dream factories', and show that the dream factory fulfills a precise political function – the 'alienation of the masses'.

The last part of the 'Science' section of the book, is concerned with the militant film and its 'dialectical task'. Considerable stress is placed on the need for constant self-criticism, or *autocritique* in the materialist cinema. And the author sees no reason why even after the advent of Socialism the film should abandon its combative stance, and become merely an organ of apologetics. He repeats Godard's demand that the film should confront vague ideas with clear images, constantly attacking the bourgeoisie on its own ground, that of ideology. The final subject of discussion is the nature of the image in the bourgeois cinema. Lenne uses the metaphor of 'puppet symbols' – these images seem to tell us the truth, but in fact deceive us. It is thus the task of the parallel cinema to use these 'puppet symbols' to 'carry the words of a revolutionary discourse'.

In conclusion, the author writes: 'We believed in the cinema . . . we even thought to find there, among the dreams and the poetry, the weapons of a subversive liberation. We were deceived'. Only after having thoroughly explored the deceptions of the cinema can the militant film maker begin scientific struggle against the stranglehold ('the daily physical and moral violence') of bourgeois ideology. But Lenne sees hope in the fact that although up until now the ruling class has held the purse strings of production, with the progress of scientific discoveries less costly techniques of mass communication are being discovered. The increasing use of videotape is an obvious example, though this is not specifically mentioned. He sees the development of these new techniques (like McLuhan, though perhaps for different reasons) as 'the greatest step forward since the invention of printing'; and, in anticipation of future struggles, looks forward to the day when 'the people will reject the poisoned opium of the official television, the privileged instrument of their own alienation'.

Two points in Lenne's analysis can be criticised, although the criticism may itself arise out of a misunderstanding of the terms used. The first is the idea of the 'parallel cinema'; the second the concept of the image as a 'puppet symbol'. G. Lukacs in the intro-

duction to his book *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism* points the existence of a letter from Krupskaya 'in which she declares that Lenin's 1905 essay "Party Organization & Party Literature" was not concerned with literature as fine art'. And it can be argued that what the concept of the 'parallel cinema' evades is any discussion of the nature and function of *film* as 'fine art'. The call to a 'parallel cinema' is a call to make agitational-propaganda films. But if we accept the distinction stressed by Lukacs between literature as fine art and literature as propaganda, and apply this to the cinema, then a whole area of critical concern is left unconsidered since the 'parallel cinema' is subsumed entirely under the latter heading.

The formulation of the visual image as a 'puppet symbol' to be entrusted with the task of 'carrying the words of revolutionary discourse', is also open to criticism. For it seems that only if we interpret 'revolutionary discourse' in the widest sense can we avoid considerable impoverishment of the essentially fertile ambiguity of the image. Lukacs criticises naturalism on the grounds that its 'schematic methods are incapable of grasping the "slyness" (Lenin's word) of reality, its wealth and beauty'. The same criticism can be applied to 'puppet symbols'. Moreover, if we accept Lukacs' analysis of the condition of literature under Stalin, then we must accept his warning that 'the notion of literature — as illustration' (and, by extension film) 'was extremely detrimental to good writing. . . . Writers must be allowed to find their own point of contact with day to day politics'. When Robbe Grillet says '*Dans l'art, rien n'est jamais connu d'avance*', he is not just giving vent to a piece of decadent formalist rhetoric. And any art object that sets out to express a single, already formulated truth, dismisses Leavis' notion of 'exploratory creation', and ignores Lukacs' theory of the 'dynamic contradictions of social life'.

It is perhaps unnecessary to add that, despite these criticisms, which may in any case be founded on a misunderstanding of Lenne's terms, '*La Mort du Cinema*' is a very important book, and one that should modify the tone of film criticism for a long time to come.

Sylvia Harvey

NOW AVAILABLE

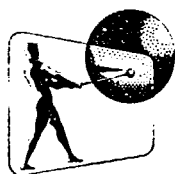
New educational films that are NOT just teachers standing in front of blackboards

Faced with pupils who no longer passively accept facts, educationists today need films which do more than teach.

Our new series of seventeen films for V and VI forms on the Humanities provide the answer. Tracing the development of Western

Civilisation, they probe and question: discuss attitudes as well as show events.

They provoke discussion over a wide range of subjects — the Arts, Social Science, Literature, History. Send for a brochure covering these and other new releases.



RANK FILM LIBRARY

RANK AUDIO VISUAL LIMITED

P.O. Box 70, Great West Road,
Brentford, Middx.

It is the aim of intellectual workers to be supported by their intellect. It will support them better today if allowed to indulge in pedantic exercises harmful to the majority. Hence Me-ti's remark: 'their activity worries me'.

B. Brecht.

The third period of the intellectuals

In any approach to the study of an ideological phenomenon, it is useful to start from the assumption that bourgeois ideology is powerful, that it has been established for a long time, and that it has extremely powerful means of persuasion and dissemination at its disposal. The historical situation of the bourgeois intellectual today has been conditioned by these facts, and it is only if we take their relevance as our basic premise that we can understand the contradictions every intellectual will have to confront, and possibly even think through, at one stage or another in his career. When I say 'every intellectual' I am making two assumptions that I believe to be correct: first, that every intellectual is still necessarily a product of bourgeois ideology in some way or other; and secondly that socialist ideology has been sufficiently elaborated and disseminated by now for there to be no intellectual who has not encountered it, and been made aware of the contradictions it poses to the bourgeois system at least once in his life. Where the period is one of apparent social calm, and where the intellectuals concerned have their feet in the morass of a petit bourgeois formation, the confrontation between bourgeois and socialist ideology may only produce itself on the level of culture, of ideas. The result of this will generally be empiriocriticism, of which the present day manifestation is structuralism with a 'marxist' flavour. In face of social conflict, the confrontation, though still based upon the same contradictions, can take on a very different character. To take an example from our most immediate history; in May '68 the intellectuals were all brought, en masse, face to face with the contradictions of their class ideology: that of the bourgeoisie and the petit bourgeoisie. — (Louis Althusser has rightly pointed out in *La Pensée* that 'for the first time in history a student revolt has spread to high-school students and to important strata of the young intellectual workers, thus becoming a mass ideological revolt'.) This mass encounter between intellectuals and their class ideology was an unprecedented phenomenon. At bottom it was an idealist one, due in part to

*The Lef (Left Front in Art) provided people of different background mental level and aims with a common platform . . . 'Eisenstein: *Notes of a Film Director*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1959, p 14.

102 extremely astute political opportunism on the part of the bourgeoisie, who realised that if they were to break the ever-spreading wave of socialist ideology, they would have to incorporate it somehow into their own programme, even if only in a negative sense. The contradictions experienced by the intellectuals of 'May '68', (revealed and brought home to them, as always, by the proletariat and its party) demonstrated the importance, the magnitude, and above all the state of the ideological front. It would be a gross error to try to align the 'students' revolt' or the 'intellectuals' revolt' of '68 with the theory and practice of the proletarian class and its party (that could only be envisaged as a tactical move); just as it would be an error to require that an essentially spontaneous phenomenon should be accompanied by theoretical reflection. Lenin rightly remarks in *What is to be done?* that the 'spontaneous element' in essence, represents nothing more nor less than consciousness in an embryonic form. (Lenin: *Collected Works*, Lawrence and Wishart, London, Vol. V, page 374.) The core of the problem is to discover the current state of this embryo of international consciousness, to find out how it develops, and what conditions are necessary for its survival. We cannot look for the meaning of May '68 and the other student movements elsewhere in the capitalist world only in the contradictions of bourgeois ideology; it also lies in the wide distribution and penetration of socialist ideology. From Surrealism to Marcuse, by way of Sartre, the 'anarchism' of N. Chomsky, Chinese 'mythology' and the already-aging neo-Trotskyites, a wave of ideologues have spread their disturbing influence through the bourgeois ideological front and penetrated deeply into its ranks. Naturally bourgeois ideology has been quick to exploit the contradictions of such a situation, and, more importantly, it is all too obvious what master, objectively speaking, these ideologues are serving in the final instance, but it remains true that, in making public under particularly auspicious circumstances the contradictions that produced them – (see C. Prevost's analysis: *Les Etudiants et le Gauchisme*, Editions Sociales) – they have given perhaps a greater breadth to the ideological front than it has ever enjoyed. Having made this point, we do not intend, of course, to propose any sort of alliance with them, which, the circumstances being what they are, would inevitably mean making theoretical concessions, but to throw light on the contradictory effects both of bourgeois ideology, and the edifices of thought which have been thrown up as a result of the penetration into enemy territory of socialist ideology, by confronting them with the dialectical and historical science of Marxism-Leninism. As Philippe Sollers points out in *De Quelques Contradictions* ('Tel Quel' No 38):

It would be erroneous to think that bourgeois ideology has disappeared, however. Weakened, eroded, forced into a defensive

position, it can still maintain itself for quite a long time to come against the rising ideology by clinging to its own contradictions. One should therefore not be surprised that the supporters of bourgeois ideology attempt to exploit ideological currents, like those born on May '68, which might seem at the farthest pole from their own.

Their method in this case has consisted in gambling systematically on the belief that the intellectuals are insufficiently prepared, theoretically, to approach the science of Marxism except in its ideological manifestations, and that when Marxism suddenly becomes a burning necessity, they will be helpless to order their own knowledge ('a collection of raw materials' as Lenin described it) in the required time except by falling back on analogical models provided by the ideologues who 'luckily' happen to be around at the time. The result is a vast network of ideology which, under the title of 'revolutionary discoveries' duplicates the ideological models of bourgeois society while aesthetic-cum-scientific or other equally deluding hybrid pseudo-forms are used to cover up the censuring of any attempt to face up to Marxism-Leninism. These types of speculations are in no way representative of the real situation of the science of the proletariat, but simply show the degree to which the intellectuals are lagging behind. However, they do give political support to the process whereby what was perceived as a wide-reaching class-conflict by many intellectuals in May '68 is undergoing a *change* and entering into a third period along trade-unionist lines (Writers' Union). They act as a camouflage for the permanent struggle (or rather, permanent war) the bourgeoisie are waging on the ideological front, which is of course why the press, with all their experience in anti-communism, are so infatuated with them.

The two cultures

It is no accident that in such a context a hasty attempt should be made to cover up the general ideological confusion by recursing to works bearing the historical imprint of the great socialist revolution. The publication of extracts and fragments (summaries of ideological content) of essays by Russian formalists and futurists such as Eisenstein, Mayakovsky, Tynianov and others, is a striking symptom of this trend. These works were for the most part previously unknown, or imperfectly known in France, and have achieved their reputation by being associated (via their authors) with historical developments, in what may be a totally incorrect manner. In fact the historical events themselves ought to be the point of reference for assessing the articles. It is impossible to believe, in present circumstances, that they have been published for the scholarly objectivity of their 'theories' alone. They have arrived among us loaded with the whole history of the (Bolshevik)

Communist Party of Russia, and more than sixty years of militant anti-communism (or rather, anti-Stalinism, although from the point of view of the bourgeoisie themselves one kind of anti-communism is as good as another). It is logical enough that, in all the ideological conjuring that has been going on with these articles (in *Cahiers du Cinéma* and *Change* alike), it should be *Cahiers*, who because of the specialist nature of the magazine have the least to fear from a theoretical confrontation, give the largest number of historical references in their edition of the texts. However it is basically a concerted endeavour, and acknowledged as such. There is a conspiracy of silence about the general history of the articles, except for vague references to their 'revolutionary' origin. (By this is meant that they were produced at the same time as the October Revolution, and were later condemned by it.)

In short we have a choice between camouflaged anti-communism and what may well be its natural concomitant, the Ivory Tower of Absolute Ideas, where the most momentous exchanges can be accomplished with supernatural ease; where Eisenstein, carrying Tynianov, can casually hand a letter he never sent to a Marxist (Pierre Klossowski) he never knew, which the 'moderate Nietzschean' who 'rocked the inversion of Hegel' can be exchanged if necessary for a preface by J. P. Faye, or vice versa – an exchange in which *Cahiers* may also be called upon to play a part. . . . To borrow another idiom, one might call it gambling everything in the hope of winning everything!

The Futurists' and Formalists' place in history is a dual one: as Jakobson has pointed out, they were 'young innovators' of the classic type; but they were also, from an early stage allied, in a very complex manner, with the Socialist Revolution. 'It was during the winters of 1914-17, that, under the auspices of the Academy of Science, some students founded the Linguistic Circle of Moscow, whose objective it was to promote linguistics and poetics . . .' (Jakobson, Preface to *Théorie de la Littérature*, Editions du Seuil). But it was not until between 1919 and 1922 that they laid down 'the foundations for scientific norms . . . the principles of phonetic analysis, and raised the problems of convergence and divergence' (see Jakobson: 'Un exemple de termes migratoires', in *Tel Quel* No 38).

These 'young innovators' were no longer particularly young, however, and one only has to read Jakobson to realise that the Kruzhki (circles) of which the formalist Linguistic Circle was one, did not materialise out of the blue, but were imported into Russia at the beginning of the nineteenth century by Russian intellectuals, stimulated by the intense cultural life of their contemporaries in the West. And of course their work was also to some degree influenced by their great forerunners Beaudoin de Courtenay (who founded the Kazan school of linguists) and Saussure. The Futurists, among whom were some of the great film makers of

Russian art, for the most part immediately took up their position on the side of the socialist revolution. 'To accept or not to accept? I never even asked myself. This revolution was my revolution': Mayakovsky. 'Can the intelligentsia work with the Bolsheviki? They can and they must': A. Blok. — See 'Aux Sources de la Littérature Soviétique', in *Oeuvres et Opinion*, Moscow, January 1969, reprinted in *Tel Quel* No 37. And Eisenstein, of course, joined the Red Army in 1918 and worked as a designer and poster painter for Agit Prop). Nonetheless some of the major influences on their work have their roots in bourgeois ideology. There can be no doubt that Eisenstein was influenced by the teaching of Meyerhold (see S. Yutkevich's recollections in *Le Cinéma Soviétique par ceux qui l'ont fait* — Editeurs Français Réunis, Paris 1966). Ilya Ehrenburg writes 'Eisenstein told me one day that without Meyerhold he would never have existed'. (See *Les Lettres Françaises* 8 Nov 1967) Eisenstein himself said 'There's only Meyerhold. I don't mean his theatre productions but his teaching' ('Perspectives' 1929 in *Cahiers du Cinéma* No 200). While it is reasonable to assume that the young Eisenstein's artistic personality was conditioned, at least in part, by his participation in the revolutionary activity of the Red Army, the same cannot be said for his mentor. Meyerhold's career antedates the revolution by some years; he worked with Stanislavsky, and was famous enough, by 1915, to be commissioned by the Czarist cinema to direct two films: *The Portrait of Dorian Gray*, in 1915, and *The Strong Man* from the book by Przybyszewsky, in 1916 (see Jay Leyda's book *Kino*, Allen & Unwin, London 1960 and G. Sadoul's *Histoire Générale du Cinéma* Vol III, Book 2). It is also relevant to point out in this context that the Formalists and the Futurists were for the most part bourgeois or petit bourgeois in origin. All of which is not particularly surprising, for a modern, even revolutionary culture does not just appear out of nowhere, and Lenin, like Stalin and Trotsky, disagreed with Bogdanov, the theoretician of the proletcult, when he held that the USSR ought to repudiate its cultural heritage. On the origins of the intellectual class, Lenin wrote

Under Soviet rule, your proletarian party and ours will be invaded by a still larger number of bourgeois intellectuals. They will worm their way into the Soviets, the courts and the administration, since communism cannot be built otherwise than with the aid of the human material created by capitalism, and the bourgeois intellectuals cannot be expelled and destroyed, but must be won over, remoulded, assimilated, and re-educated, just as we must — in a protracted struggle waged on the basis of the dictatorship of the proletariat, re-educate the proletarians themselves, who do not abandon their petty bourgeois prejudices at one stroke, by a miracle, at the behest of the Virgin Mary, or the behest of a slogan,

106 resolution or decree, but only in the course of a long and difficult mass struggle against mass petty bourgeois influences. (*Left Wing Communism – an Infantile Disorder*, Collected Works, Lawrence and Wishart, Vol 31, page 115).

And yet it is from these very factors: cultural heritage and class origin, and from the theoretical confusion and rectifying measures they provoked, that all the misunderstandings created by the Futurists and Formalists arose: misunderstandings which continue to be exploited today. Lenin was one of the first to challenge these movements politically, stressing their ideological determinants (the 'Machism' of Bogdanov): 'The first obstacle was the plethora of bourgeois intellectuals, who very often regarded the new type of workers' and peasants' educational institutions as the most convenient field for testing their individual theories in philosophy and culture. . . . '(Lenin: *First All Russian Congress on Adult Education*, C.W. Vol 29, page 336. On Bogdanov and Mach, see *Materialism and Empiriocriticism*, Vol 14.) He came back to the subject with greater insistence on the occasion of the first congress of the Proletkult (2-12 October, 1920) when he attacked a speech of Lunacharsky's in the famous draft resolution, *On Proletarian Culture* (C.W. Vol 3, pages 316-331):

All educational work in the Soviet Republic of workers and peasants, in the field of political education in general and the field of art in particular should be imbued with the spirit of the class struggle being waged by the proletariat. . . .

The all-Russian Proletcult Congress rejects in the most resolute manner, as theoretically unsound and practically harmful, all attempts to invent one's own particular brand of culture.

. . . On the contrary, the Congress enjoins all Proletcult organisations to fully consider themselves in duty bound to act as auxiliary bodies of the network of establishments under the People's Commissariat of Education.

The first draft of this same resolution carries in addition the following statement:

Not the *invention* of a new proletarian culture, but the *development* of the best models, traditions and results of the *existing* culture, *from the point of view* of the Marxist world outlook and the conditions of life and struggle of the proletariat in the period of its dictatorship. (Lenin: C.W. Vol 42, page 217).

What Lenin is saying throughout these writings is that his theory of the two cultures under capitalism cannot be used for dealing with the reality of a socialist country. Two years later Trotsky discussed almost exactly the same problems in *Literature and*

Revolution (University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor Paperbacks, 1960) with the difference that Trotsky had a little more time at his disposal in the summer of 1922 and was consequently able to attempt to submit cultural problems to more detailed criticism. The book does contain some inspired insights, but it is evident from its anecdotal and (sociologically) impressionistic character that the author had not been able to do adequate groundwork, and its general effect is unfortunately only to compound the existing confusion. In this it compares unfavourably with the total Marxist rigour of thought in Lenin's *Leon Tolstoy: Mirror of the Russian Revolution* (C.W. Vol 15). Trotsky's book, published in 1924, contains, among other essays, a long critique of Futurism and a long critique of The Formalist School of Poetry. Of Futurism, Trotsky writes: '(it) carried the features of its social origin, bourgeois bohemia, into the new stage of its development' (page 130). The article ends with a very long and well documented letter from Gramsci, about Italian Futurism, which was already leaning towards fascism. As for the Formalists, the end of Trotsky's criticism of them carries the following comment, which I quote because the way in which some of it is formulated gives the impression that the author was intending to stress the metaphysical foundation of linguistics: 'The formalists show a fast-ripening religiousness. They believe that "in the beginning was the word". We believe that in the beginning was the deed. The word followed, as its phonetic shadow' (page 183). It is easy to see what misunderstandings lie at the base of this word-game about origins. Trotsky's idea of art is ultimately metaphysical (see for instance his remark in 'The Formalist School of Poetry', page 178, that 'It is unquestionably true that the need for art is not created by economic conditions', which is in complete contradiction with Marx – see *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), but when we read this sentence today, we cannot help thinking of the work that could have been done then if the critical analysis of Futurism and Formalism had been conducted in a scientific manner. Most of it still remains to be done.

It remains for us to discover why such a critique (or rather, auto-critique), in line with Lenin's analysis that proletarian culture is not an invention . . . but the *development* of the best models, traditions and results of the *existing* culture, *from the point of view* of the Marxist world outlook', was never produced. Futurism, despite Bogdanov's claims to the contrary, was certainly not out of line with the general trend of culture at the time. Noticeably similar experiments were taking place in the artistic field in Italy (Futurism), Germany (Bauhaus) and Holland (De Stijl). It is precisely for lack of theorisation that the avant garde movements of the world have scarcely progressed since the twenties. Given their specific nature it was a Marxist-Leninist critique they needed,

108 and had they been submitted to one they could have progressed. This being so, why was one never produced? Lenin went part of the way in producing warnings and suggestions, which though they are no more than that, show a high degree of ideological elaboration. The answer is simple, and can be found in any history of the USSR and the October revolution. In Russia in 1914, 76% of the population was illiterate, 85% of women could not read or write, 90% in rural areas; only 33% of boys and 14% of girls in the whole of Russia received any education at all and only 3% of all children received secondary education; the total number of students in universities, including colleges of engineering and the higher technical schools, only 120,000, and in the whole of Russia only 1½ million people had got beyond primary school. (See Jean Ellenstein: *La Revolution des Révolutions*, Editions Sociales, Paris 1967, and *Histoire de l'URSS, des Origines à nos Jours* (Editions de Moscou, 1967). Lenin wrote at that time 'There is no country in Europe apart from Russia which is so uncivilised, where the masses are so without education, culture or general knowledge'. It is hardly surprising that under such circumstances the analysis of a theory of art should have seemed unimportant and even grossly irrelevant. The gravity of the situation was constantly stressed by the Soviet leaders, and it was a constantly recurring theme with Lenin, Stalin, Trotsky and Zhdanov that it was of priority importance that the peasants and workers should learn to read and write. After the revolution it became obligatory for every wage-earner to attend classes for two hours during his working day. Lenin wrote in 1923: 'We are behind in the liquidation of illiteracy', and at the Eleventh Congress of the Russian Communist Party in 1922 he stressed the gravity of cultural problems and the importance of the ideological front.

If the conquering nation is more cultured than the vanquished nation, the former imposes its culture on the latter, but if the opposite is the case, the vanquished nation imposes its culture upon the conqueror. Has not something like this happened in the capital of the RSFSR? Have the 4,700 communists (nearly a whole army division and all of them the very best) come under the influence of an alien culture? True, there may be the impression that the vanquished have a high level of culture. But that is not the case at all. Their culture is miserable, insignificant, but it is still at a higher level than ours, miserable and low as it is, it is higher than that of our responsible communist administrators, for the latter lack administrative ability. (Eleventh Congress of the RCP(B), C.W. Vol 33, page 288).

Trotsky, in his critique of Futurism (written in the same year, 1922) also stresses the fact that it is only the bourgeoisie who could have an interest in abolishing bourgeois culture. The question could have no meaning for the Russian people, as they had no

culture of any kind, not even bourgeois culture. (As Lenin said: 'a genuine bourgeois culture would have been quite enough for us to start with'.) Illiteracy was seen as the prime stumbling block to progress, and all resources were harnessed to the essential first step of conquering it. Literature, like the economic conditions determining it, had to become 'part of the common cause of the proletariat' (Lenin: *Party Organisation and Party Literature* 1905, C.W. Vol 10, page 45), and so it was logical that literature had first of all to fulfil an educative function. At the first congress of Soviet writers in 1934 Zhdanov once more reaffirmed this principle: 'All the conditions have now been created in which it will be possible for Soviet literature to produce works answering the increased needs of the masses on the cultural plane'. (Zhdanov: *Sur la Littérature et sur l'Art*, Preface by L. Aragon, Ed. Nouvelle Critique, Paris 1940). The result of these policies was that between 1920 and 1940, 50 million men and women learned to read and write. The other reason why there was no scientific (i.e. Marxist-Leninist) theory of art in its various disciplines in the twenties, was the lack of preparation on the part of the intellectuals who were of bourgeois origin. Lenin realised this, and never failed to sketch in the general principles of a scientific theory of art where the occasion demanded it (see, on this subject, the important works written in exile such as *Materialism and Empiriocriticism* and *Philosophical Notebooks*).

All these are factors which it is simply impossible to ignore in a serious study of the Russian avant garde of the twenties (whether of linguists, writers, painters or film makers), and one must inevitably speculate on the ambiguity of an ideological situation in which attention is focused on the 'modern art' that accompanied the socialist revolution simply in order to emphasise the difficulties it encountered in Soviet Russia. To do so is to put a minor historical issue before a major one. It is also (implicitly, under the guise of 'objectivity') to resuscitate the old demagogic charge that there is 'no freedom of expression' in the socialist countries. As it is now common knowledge that our much-vaunted freedom of expression in our much-vaunted free world covers up more abuses than it reveals, and has always been the prerogative of a dominant minority anyway, the choice between the two cultures is a persistent source of embarrassment to intellectuals on both sides of the fence. The intellectuals of the capitalist world, confronted with a choice between progressive materialist culture and restrictive ruling-class culture, respond by confusedly attempting to make the two interchangeable. In this they are adopting a classic idealist pattern: refusing on principle to contemplate a scientific/historical approach, and disappearing in times of conflict behind a metaphysical apparatus which finds expression in a kind of verbal diarrhoea in which anything can change into anything else.

This metaphysical apparatus has been the arch-pitfall for all ideologies of avant-garde art, and for that reason particular care has to be exercised in the use of words like montage, or they will end up covering the wildest ambiguities that collective misunderstandings can devise, e.g. 'The Writers' Union' – a 'union' which prefaced the script of J. L. Godard's semi-anarchist *Le Gai Savoir* with the words 'Godard quite naturally assumed a place in the avant garde of the May movement', which might prompt one to ask them what part, if any, the proletariat had in their view of history.

The idea of montage, though also having a place in other disciplines, is famous today because of the cinema, more particularly the Soviet cinema. Eisenstein devoted what is without doubt the major part of his written work to it, without, however, having been either its inventor or its only theoretician. If we set about enquiring into the current implications of the term, we shall certainly have to take Eisenstein into account, but also what produced Eisenstein: the history of the Soviet cinema. And since this is our starting-point we ought to take another look, before going any further, at Lenin's famous recommendation to Lunacharsky in 1922: 'You are known among us as a protector of the arts, so you must well remember that, of all the arts, for us the cinema is the most important, (letter from Lunacharsky to Boltyansky, quoted in *Kino*, op.cit.). Lenin's interest in the cinema has been stressed by many authors; it is for instance well known that it was at his instigation that the Soviet government organised mobile cinemas on the agit trains (the chief cameraman on the first one, the 'Lenin' was E. Tisse, and the editor was D. Vertov) and his *Theses on Production Propaganda*, 1922 (C.W. Vol 31) contains a recommendation for 'the more extensive and systematic use of films' (page 406). More often than not, these directives have been interpreted by film makers in the light of their own theological attitude to art and cinema. Nothing could be further from Lenin's own viewpoint, which was based on a preoccupation with abolishing the illiteracy then reigning among the vast majority of the population, and with helping to spread information by pictorial means to people who could not read. Also, simple or one-word titles followed by an easily recognisable picture were a highly effective method of educating the semi-literate. Modern audio-visual aids are a development of the same principle. The method is admirably illustrated by Vertov's films. In *Stride Soviet!* for example, the titles 'factory', 'workshop' etc are juxtaposed with quick shots of men at work and machines in action, then there is a picture of someone trying unsuccessfully to get water from a tap, followed by a title 'no water'. All of which confirms what one suspected, that Lenin's directive had nothing to do with a

On the other hand, if one looks at Eisenstein's theories alone, the question of his theological conception of the cinema is obviously one of the first one has to raise. 'The new art has got to put an end to the dualism of the spheres of 'feeling' and 'reason'. It has got to restore to science its sensuality, and restore to the intellectual process its passion and fire. It has got to plunge the process of abstract thought into the turbulence of practice. Restore to the speculative emasculated formula all the splendour and the wealth of the form, as experienced with the flesh, to give to the arbitrariness of the formal the precision of an ideological formulation. That is our challenge. We herewith notify the artistic epoch to come of our requirements. What sort of art will be strong enough to fulfil them? *Uniquely and exclusively, the resources of the cinema*'. (*Perspectives*, 1929, *Cahiers du Cinéma* No 209, Feb 1969, page 26). The italics are Eisenstein's. It is not within my purpose to do more than draw attention to the poetic, impressionistic nature of this declaration of faith, and the critical apparatus that would need to be applied to it before it could be 'placed' theoretically. The author retained this metaphysical illusion to the end of his life, and it is to be found, in virtually unchanged form in the 1946 preface to *Notes of a Film Director* (Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1959): 'The problem of the synthesis of arts, a synthesis realisable in the cinema, has not yet found its full solution' (page 6). I am not intending here to draw invidious comparisons between Eisenstein and Vertov. From what we know of Vertov's writings (which is not much), they seem far less completely worked out than Eisenstein's. I simply wish to point out that Eisenstein's written work is closely linked to a precise historical context, and that the critic cannot, on pain of being shown up by the work itself, attempt to analyse their meaning except through a documented and critical reading of their relationship to that context. We need go no farther than the idea of montage for exemplification of this. Its cinematic origin lies in what is described today as 'the Kuleshov effect': 'the montage of the same picture of the actor Mozhukin with a great variety of other pictures, creating contrasting situations' (Lev Kuleshov in *Le Cinéma Soviétique par ceux qui l'ont fait*, Editeurs Français Réunis, Paris '66). In Eisenstein's terminology, however, it also has a certain relationship to the theatrical experiments of the twenties and the teaching of Meyerhold whose sympathies and practice were futurist. In *Le Cinéma Soviétique* . . . (op cit) Yutkevich describes the birth of the 'scenic attraction' which was to change in Eisenstein's theory into the 'montage of attractions'. It was during their work together on a production of *Columbine's Scarf* (Meyerhold had staged it in 1912, and they had of course seen his version) that Yutkevich and Eisenstein had the idea of calling their work 'scenic attraction'. On the cover of the book of the play

112 (which they had re-named *Columbine's Garter*) above the dedication 'To Vsevolod Meyerhold . . .' they wrote 'Scenic attractions invented by Sergei Eisenstein and Sergei Yutkevich'. It was a short time after their work on this play that Eisenstein became Meyerhold's assistant. We have seen that Eisenstein made no secret of his debt to Meyerhold, and there is no reason for us not to take him at his word, a fact which is appreciated by Luda and Jean Schnitzer, translators of Eisenstein, and editors with M. Martin of *Le Cinéma Soviétique* . . . (op cit). (See, for example, their note on an allusion by Eisenstein to Meyerhold's production of *Revisor*: 'SME is alluding here to the play *Revizor* and *The Misfortune of Intelligence* (original title) produced by his one-time mentor, Vsevolod Meyerhold' – *Cahiers du Cinéma*, No 213, June, 1969)

It was Kuleshov, then, who elaborated the theory of montage, and Meyerhold the practice. It is significant that Eisenstein's attempts to define the idea are almost completely devoid of references to any other films but his own, or to his debt to the avant garde theatre. Curiously enough he chooses instead to support his arguments by reference to theories of literature, and in particularly formalist theories (see 'Montage in 1938' in *Notes of a Film Director*, op cit, the analysis of Pushkin's *Poltava*, inter alia, pages 85-91, and the explicit reference to 'Problems of Poetic Language' by Tynianov). So, on this question of montage alone, without wishing to play down Eisenstein's very considerable contribution on several counts, I must nonetheless point out the critical inter-relationship that exists within it between the history of Soviet cinema and the conditions which produced it, futurist theatre, represented by Meyerhold, and formalist theories of literature. The idea of montage is itself a 'montage' of influences and attractions. Its outstanding quality has been its avant-gardism, and as a practice it has had some very satisfying results, but as a concept it has always been surrounded by the impressionistic vagueness endemic in aesthetic texts flirting with science. No-one took heed of Lenin's Marxist warnings; no one studied works by Lenin which were of fundamental relevance, such as *Leon Tolstoy as the Mirror of the Russian Revolution* or *Materialism and Empiriocriticism*. One can see what lesson the intellectuals might have drawn in their relationship to the avant garde if they had heeded this thought of Lenin's (contained, it should be noted, in an article whose perspective is entirely positive): 'From this point of view, the contradictions in Tolstoy's views are indeed a mirror of those *contradictory conditions* in which the peasantry had to play *their historical part* in our revolution . . .' (Lenin: C.W. Vol 15, page 206. The italics are mine). These remarks of Lenin's read like a call for the enlightenment of the bourgeois intellectuals of his own era, who had, of course, played out their historical part in the revolution in conditions just as contradictory. This is basically the meaning behind all of Lenin's warnings, and the later warnings by

Trotsky, Zhdanov and Stalin against Futurism and Formalism. One has only to read the relevant texts with a little care to see that there was never any question of rejecting the contribution of bourgeois culture (and who would deny that Formalism and Futurism were products of bourgeois culture?): 'Marxism has won its historic significance as the ideology of the revolutionary proletariat because, far from rejecting the most valuable achievements of the bourgeois epoch it has, on the contrary assimilated and *refashioned* everything of value in the more than two thousand years of the development of human thought and culture' (Lenin: *On Proletarian Culture*, C.W. Vol 31, page 317). The italics are mine; in fact the phrase is of such importance that it deserves to be stressed twice over: AND REFASHIONED. It will be seen that Lenin did not unconditionally reject the Formalist and Futurist schools; he simply demanded that they should agree to think of their work not as a fundamental transformation of bourgeois culture, but as one of its many products, requiring the transforming action of a Marxist reading in order to be decoded and assimilated. In place of changes in form (the ideological montage of attractions of bourgeois culture), Lenin puts the transforming reality of Marxism. One cannot help but wonder about the unconscious motivations of certain contemporary authors when they make use of the bourgeois trends that set in with Stalinism to glorify such phenomena as Machism and Bogdanov and the theology of art, which were all rightly condemned by the theorists of Marxism-Leninism. Even Luda and Jean Schnitzer, who have done some highly interesting work, as I pointed out, are not guiltless in this respect. For instance, when they write the following note to one of Eisenstein's articles (note 20, 'La Non-Indifférente Nature' 2, *Cahiers du Cinéma* No 213): 'Meyerhold (1874-1941) inspired innovator, virtual father of all contemporary theatre, was accused of excessive formalism, arrested in 1939 and died in a prison camp. Even his name was banned, and it is no accident that SME ends the first part of his article with an *internal justification* of the staging of the dinner scene. *Revizor* itself remains the most controversial but also the most admired of VM's productions', no doubt they think they are supplying objective information and doing something to rehabilitate Meyerhold as a man of the theatre. But what kind of real objectivity is there in this web of ideological ambiguities? Nothing that has survived of Meyerhold's written work (see; *Le Théâtre Théâtrale* 'Pratique du Théâtre' series, Gallimard) is of any theoretical interest, and our only assurance of his seriousness in this direction comes from references to him by the Futurists and the Formalists, which does not do much to add credence to his case. The whole argument becomes transported then onto a political plane, where the ground has become equally shaky. For while it is true that Formalism has 'gained' in the eyes of the European bourgeoisie through falling foul of the

114 so-called Stalinist (or Zhdanovist) line, it is also true that it has been thoroughly picked to pieces, right down to its linguistic foundations by critics who could not be suspected of Stalinism (among others, Jacques Derrida: *L'Écriture et la Différence*, Editions du Seuil, *Tel Quel* series; *De la Grammatologie*, Editions de Minuit, and Julia Kristeva, *Semiotique*, Editions du Seuil, *Tel Quel* series). To sum up: the idea of montage is linked ideologically with the history of the Soviet cinema and the history of Futurism and Formalism. It can be used in a scientific discourse only if it has been adequately defined by means of theoretical analysis of its metaphysical origins; otherwise it will be assimilated into ideological speculation and simply become part of a montage of the same old misunderstandings that have accompanied it from the beginning.

Ideological Montage

Cahiers du Cinéma approached the publication of the newly translated Eisenstein articles with considerably more methodological rigour than *Change*. When the first selection came out they announced: 'We shall accompany these translations, which will, of course, continue to appear over a number of months, with a series of articles attempting to explore their significance. These will aim to put them back in their historical (political and cultural) context, and to bring out their contemporary relevance to cinematic and extra-cinematic debate (No 209, Feb 1969, page 21). *Change*, however, in their introduction to a 'montage' of sentences and aphorisms of Eisenstein's, rebaptised for the occasion 'Structure, Montage, Passage' tells us to expect simply a 'change of form'. It is true that *Cahiers du Cinéma* hardly follows up this introduction at all (except in an article by J. L. Comolli, which is interesting enough to demand further discussion elsewhere) and quickly drifted into *Change's* confused practice of transplanting aesthetic-cum-philosophic entities into a sort of artistic pantheon. *Cahiers'* capitulation to *Change's* theories immediately had the effect of reducing the promised exploratory articles and historical data to translators' notes and series of collages or montages of illustrations, stills from Eisenstein's films being used to ornament texts that have only a very distant relationship to his thought. All this is to say nothing of the 'montage' of content in the magazines, where, cheek by jowl with the Eisenstein articles we find such statements as 'The political film has always held a distinguished place in the cinema: in the front rank Eisenstein (all the silent work), Leni Riefenstahl (*Triumph of the Will*, 1934), Frank Capra (*Prelude to War*, 1942) – Louis Marcorelles: 'Lépreux du Direct', *Cahiers du Cinéma*, No 210, page 37). The inclusion of Leni Riefenstahl, official film-maker of the Nazis, in such a list is just one indication of how wildly off the rails it is possible to go if one's basic theoretical structure is 'montage', conceived,

in the manner of today's avant garde formalists, as a change of forms. An additional irony is that, throughout, they present their own justification of avant gardism as though it were ideologically interchangeable with the work of Eisenstein. The prize for muddled thinking in this direction must certainly go to Dominique Noguez for the following comment on *Flesh*, an American film about a sexual jack-of-all-trades: 'This film is modern, in the way every work is modern where one can murmur *Freud* and *Marx* in one breath, (*Cahiers du Cinéma*), No 211, April 1969 – in the same issue as the first part of Eisenstein's essay 'La Non-Indifférente Nature'). I do not need to dwell on the theoretical and practical problems raised by murmuring any such thing. 115

Eisenstein's Articles

Of the considerable mass of articles, essays, scenarios, criticisms, notes, etc left by Eisenstein, of which a certain number have been reprinted in the Moscow 'Iskusstvo' edition of his selected works in 6 volumes, we in France have only the anthology which appeared under the title *Réflexions d'un Cinéaste* (Editions du Progrès, Moscow, 1958. [Translator's note: in English, *Notes of a Film Director*, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1959] and the disparate mass of articles published here and there in various magazines, chiefly *Cahiers du Cinéma*, probably in all scarcely a tenth of the Russian edition of *The Selected Works*. But however considerable Eisenstein's critical practice may be, it is none the less subordinate to his practice as a film maker and as an exponent of cinematic language. By this I mean that Eisenstein's 'theoretical' work constantly refers back to his experience and production as a film maker, and that these are his first and most usual point of reference for defining his concepts. Eisenstein shares with other non-verbal artists the belief that the philosophic concepts he uses cannot have any other historical perspective but that which he has given them in his own work. This attitude (which is actually less marked in Eisenstein than in many other film makers – and painters and musicians), always results in certain of their utterances being rather vague and impressionistic; these they then feel obliged to assimilate into their text by adopting a lyrical-cum-poetic tone throughout (see the extract from *Perspectives*, quoted above). In addition, Eisenstein persistently alludes in passing to historical and cultural events, the importance of which may not be well known to us today (see, *inter alia*, the short article 'Poor Salieri' which has ended up a quarter as long again because of all the translator's notes needed to make it intelligible. It would also contribute to our understanding of this article, and of Eisenstein's use of Pushkin in general, to know what role the works of the latter played in futurist debate.) Finally, still on this one issue of the organisation of the text, there are considerable problems involved in translating Eisenstein: for example, he invents words,

116 plays on the phonetic composition of certain concepts, links ideas by means of assonance, expresses his thought in verbless sentences and phrases etc. Take, for instance, the beginning of his very important article 'Our October' (published in the Moscow magazine, *Kino*, on March 12, 1928, No 12). In a semi-literal translation it reads as follows:

Our 'October'

On the side of the game and the non-game.

Of two people who are fighting – it is the third who is right.*

At this moment, in the ring:

This one who plays – this one who does not.

That means that it is the third one who is right.*

The one who is outside the game.

For the cinema, being right* means being to *this side*, exterior to the game and the non-game.

*(Translator's note: there is a pun here on the double meaning, in French, of *raison*=reason, and (in the phrase *avoir raison*)=right in the sense 'to be right'. Thus, an alternative translation of line 7 would be 'for the cinema, reason is on this side', etc.)

For the cinema, 'being right' *stands on its own feet*, with its own terminology, even if it is undefined.

The orientation of the film, which is situated outside this opposition, makes its appearance in a perfectly legitimate and opportune manner.

At the moment of total victory for the slogans of the previous stage.

At the moment of their recognition by all.

At the moment when they have at last arrived, after having gone through the stage of platitude, truism, absurdity.

It is at this moment that the dialectical reversal of a given stage into its opposite generally occurs.

Theoretical innovation – 'non-game' in its time has transformed the subject into a *fact*.

The illusion into *material*.

Aesthetic fetishisation is replaced by fetishism of the material.

But fetishism of the material is still far from being materialism.

It remains, above all and despite all, a *fetishism*.

When the problem of the hegemony of 'the material' has passed into current consumption, hysterical howlings, the 'cult' of the material – then that is the end of the material.

And a new page has to be turned, under the totally contrary slogan:

Contempt for the material.

(The article as a whole has not yet appeared in French, and is in the course of translation. It appears in Vol 5 of the *Selected Works*).

Eisenstein operates by affirmations, which follow on from and transform each other, while continuing to be rooted in 'ideas'

which he never defines – at least not in the same essay. Scattered throughout the texts there is an accumulation of original insight, theoretical details and methodological corrections, which it seems to me, from my reading of the text (and taking into account that I was dealing with a translation) have to be carried over from one article to another, if one is to achieve a correct reading and not get lost following up too many false trails. The biography of the author (participation in the revolution, travels in Europe and the United States, return from the United States, etc) has to be taken into account in the same way. For instance the relationship between Eisenstein the theoretician and Eisenstein 'the spontaneous creative artist' is as yet far from being elucidated, for the text is studded with an enormous number of clues which tend to contradict each other. And once again, the only critical points I have raised here are those liable to arise from the most general reading of the text. I have not mentioned all the references to scientific theories which are unknown or very little known outside the USSR, especially in the inter-disciplinary usage Eisenstein makes of them – for example his borrowing of the concept of 'reflexology' from Vladimir Bekhterev (pointed out by Luda and Jean Schnitzer in *Cahiers du Cinéma* No 209) or his use of Pavlov's theories ('Had I been more familiar with Ivan Pavlov's teaching, I would have called the *theory of the montage of attractions* the *theory of artistic stimulants*'. Eisenstein: *Notes of a Film Director*, 'About Myself and My Films', page 17.) Translator's notes can point out the existence of this kind of problem, but cannot solve them. See, for example, the note on Plekhanov: 'One of the first Russian Marxists. Major theorist of Marxist aesthetics (against 'art for art's sake'). Went over to Menshevism 1903'. This is doubtless as accurate an informational note on Plekhanov as one could get, but what does this kind of accuracy mean when what we want to know about Plekhanov is not his dates but the role of his work, and how the work of Eisenstein (among others of course), was affected by Plekhanov's ideological complexity. If, still on this one simple point, we also take into account Plekhanov's disagreements in 1910 with Menshevik militants and writers, and Lenin's various interventions in the debate (see C.W. Vol. 16 *Heroes of the 'Reservation'*, the metaphor of the 'locomotive' on pages 372-373) we shall begin to get an idea of the frame of reference of Eisenstein's thought, of which notes can only indicate the extent, but not give a detailed picture.

From the foregoing it will be seen how much work is needed on the origins of the notion of montage alone before it can claim anything other than ideological status. In fact it is the whole corpus of Eisenstein's theories which will need to be worked upon. The first step would be to read them in their context ('historically determined, dictated by the epoch, the moment' – Eisenstein: *Cahiers du Cinéma* No 214, July-August 1969). This has to be

118 done with all the more care and rigour in that Eisenstein's huge, and extraordinarily rich body of writing is (and would be, even if never spoken and never read) historically determining for any possible scientific approach to that ideological monstrosity: the cinema. To my knowledge, Barthélémy Amengal is the only one to have noticed the dependance of Eisenstein's theory of art on Hegelian idealism. Commenting on a very interesting edition of the two versions of *Bezhin Meadow* as Eisenstein planned them (*Cahiers du Cinéma*, No 203, August 1968) he makes the following remark about an essay (written in 1935 and reprinted in *Film Form*) which Eisenstein was inspired to write by his work on *Bezhin Meadow*:

Eisenstein starts out from the fact that certain theories which at a given historical period express the scientific knowledge of that period, in the following one lose their status as science but remain valid on the level of art and metaphor. This was what happened to mythology, which was a symbolic representation of the sum of the ancients' knowledge. This was also what happened to Hegel's concept of the absolute priority of the *idea*. It was overthrown by Marx, but remains determinant in art.

While I do not share B. Amengal's conviction, or his formulations, I nonetheless feel that he has hit upon the basic flaw of all Eisenstein's theory. It is in terms of the idealism of Mach, Bogdanov, the theology of art, etc, that we must re-read Eisenstein today, and when we publish his work we must analyse it in that light. It also seems to me that Eisenstein's studies can *only* be applied to cinema theory, as, in relation to the scientific advances made in disciplines to which it is far from unrelated, such as the theory of literature, cinema theory is historically backward. To attempt to impose Eisenstein's terminology and concepts, which are proper to the 'theoretical' situation of the cinema on another discipline such as literature would be to hold the more advanced discipline back in favour of a retrogressive enterprise, with what can in this case properly be called a strongly phenomenological bias. (For an attack on phenomenology, see in particular Jacques Derrida on Husserl: *La Voix et le Phénomène*, PUF, Paris, and 'La Forme et le Vouloir Dire', in *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* No 81, 1967, Part 3) Eisenstein's written work is dated, it goes without saying. To publish it without attempting to 'place' it, in relation to the state of development of other disciplines at that time is to do Eisenstein a great injustice; as though he could ever have considered it 'finished'. (In 1944, Eisenstein wrote: 'I do not consider my development at an end. In fact I am afraid that it will give me a lot more trouble yet'. *Notes of a Film Director*, *op cit*). It is also a sign that those who are publishing it in this way are reluctant to accept a temporal dimension in the evolution of knowledge, and this is a position which leads directly

back to the old idealist dream of the end of history, where everything is in an eternal present tense, and Homer and Alexander can join hands with Rousseau, Napoleon with Lenin, Jean Paris with Saussure and everybody with everybody else, and anything with everything.

119

Non Conclusion

The publication of work by Eisenstein that has never before appeared in French, and the ideological speculation that has taken place around it is, of course, on the cultural front only one event among others. I have felt justified in giving it such prominence only because the way in which these articles and their historical situation have been reappraised seem to me extraordinarily revelatory of the real objectives of certain contemporary studies, which, despite the evident good faith of their authors, have somehow ended up on the side of the dominant ideology. That such an analysis should reveal, in the last instance, the survival of Hegelian presuppositions in certain French intellectuals is not really surprising ; they have served, and always will serve as a refuge for the bourgeois intellectual confronted with the realisation that his knowledge is a 'collection of raw materials', in which many of the elements are contradictory (a realisation which is liable to come on him particularly strongly when he finds himself roughly precipitated into history). There is a whole ideological front of which Hegel is still on many counts the dominant figure, and analysis of Eisenstein, far from being a side issue, belongs in the main line of work to be done on this front. There is an urgent need to submit the work of other authors to such analysis, for example, Sade, Nietzsche, Freud, Joyce, Pound (see 'L'Ouest s'eloigne' by Philippe Sollers, in *Promesse*, Nos 23 and 24), Bataille, Artaud, Blanchot, Chomsky, etc. In a political situation such as ours *everything* has to be decoded, read and re-read, and confronted with the science of Marxism-Leninism! Why shouldn't we do it?

Marcelin Pleynet
August 1969

First published in *Cinéthique* No 5, 1969 and reprinted here with their permission.

Translated by Susan Bennett.

Examining a critique at its critical point

In the midst of the group of articles discussed in the preceding section,* *Cinétique* carries a long and important article by Marcelin Pleyne entitled *The 'Left' Front of Art – Eisenstein and the Old Young Hegelians*. We shall not for the moment enquire into the ideological or tactical reasons for the inclusion of this article, or its central position in the magazine – interesting though the question is. Our reasons for submitting Pleyne's text to more detailed examination are twofold and cannot easily be discussed in isolation from each other: the first is the intrinsic interest of the non-polemical parts of the text: the highly pertinent and topical questions posed by the author, the warnings and the problems and the possible solutions he suggests for them. The second is the fact that we, *Cahiers du Cinéma* are directly and indirectly criticised (the *and* the *indirectly* present considerable complications, as we shall see later) on several counts, although not, perhaps, in the most basic essentials, and we should like to make our own position clear by asking *Cinétique* some searching questions in return.

We emphatically do not intend this discussion to be seen as the first blow in one of those interminable and repetitive bouts of wrangling so beloved of literary scandal-mongers. Our purpose here is simply to elaborate and reaffirm the theoretical position which we outlined in Part 1.*

Let us now look at Pleyne's text. We shall attempt first to outline its major points, and discover where its theoretical matrix lies. All the general lines of the problematic are there in the first paragraph. Bourgeois, capitalist ideology, though still dominant, has reached a political and economic crisis. Its upholders remain blind to their ideology, and its rationale (indeed, it is the defining characteristic of this ideology that they should) but they are nonetheless aware that it is losing momentum, and is in the grip of an irreversible decline. And they are reacting as they always do in the face of an attack by an expanding alien ideological current, by attempting, chiefly on the 'cultural' plane to annex and use to their own ends those parts of it which they think they can subvert. Thanks to their economic dominance and the complicity (voluntary or otherwise) of 'active ideologies', they are able to use the powerful means of persuasion at their disposal, including the information networks, to annex material for their own programme that is absolutely inimical to all they stand for, put their stamp on it and expose it for sale as though it belonged to them. They attempt to establish total control over the 'market' of socialist ideology, flooding it with so-called 'revolutionary'

*See *Screen*, Summer 1971

texts (which may in fact be genuinely revolutionary, but most are not, but which in any case contradict each other and cancel each other out) in the hope that they themselves will appear liberal, while the socialist texts crowd each other out and destroy each other. There is another, less easily-spotted side to the bourgeois *ideological front* which also has to be combatted: this consists of work which has a genuinely 'progressive' intention, but which because of its unconsidered demands for immediate revolution, its lack of theory, its confused eclecticism and unscientific political thought (proferring an unspecified job-lot of *raw materials* which can be quickly sold off, consumed and 'disinfected') ends up by having the same effects as the other material. The radical alternative to these lines of approach, Marcelin Pleynet claims, lies in uncompromising work and precise theoretical research, and the ruthless confrontation of all texts (meaning books, reviews and films) with the science of Marxism-Leninism before any attempt is made to use them.

We do not believe we have either distorted or reduced the basic substance of Pleynet's article. We would recommend readers who are interested to know the finer points of his argument to look at *Cinétique* No 5.

Having thus established his premises, and swiftly outlined the conclusions which we henceforth proceed naturally out of them, Pleynet gets down to the circumstance on which his article is based: the publication by certain 'reviews' of texts related to the very complex period of Russian history immediately preceding and following the October revolution of 1917, and the different 'cultural' currents of the epoch (literary, cinematic and theatrical) and their tangled and difficult relationship to the historical/political/social moment. We are *completely* in agreement with the general problematic of the article and its basic principles (and when we say this, we are not using the rhetorical 'I grant you that . . .' device much favoured by Pleynet in his article). It is the course which the argument follows after the exposition, its development, which gives us cause for concern. Our reservations about this will not be easy to expound. The article is a well-planned whole, incisive, clever, very often rigorous, but its general strategy seems to us to call for the same kind of criticism as Philippe Sollers made about Bernard Pingaud in his article 'Le Réflexe de Réduction' (*Quinzaine Littéraire*, January 1968, reprinted in *Théorie d'Ensemble*, Editions du Seuil, *Tel Quel* series), viz *Truncated quotations, amalgamations, hasty dramatisations, demands to choose between two so-called 'contradictory' positions, condemnations which leave no room for appeal*. That this should be so, initially comes as a surprise, since the declared aim of the article is to attack (and eschew on its own account) all improper amalgamations, all deliberate muddling of issues, or fostering of misapprehensions, or 'ideological conjuring'.

So much amalgamation goes on in Pleynet's article that to point out every example of it would be tantamount to reproducing almost the whole article, so we shall confine ourselves to pointing out its general purpose: first of all *Cahiers* and *Change* are identified with each other (though no evidence is ever produced as to why this might be justified); this identification then opens the way to all kinds of condensations, assimilations, sliding over important points, and quoting out of context.

So, a sentence, an example or an argument drawn in the first instance from one magazine can be transferred to the other, then back to the first, often without any indication of what is happening. Deliberate confusion on this scale strikes an unpleasant note in an article which denounces 'collages' and 'analogical models' which such zeal, especially since it is presented as though it were the unmanipulated truth, and readers who are not forewarned (or who are ready to take Pleynet at his word, which amounts to the same thing) may well receive it as such. There are too many examples of this procedure for us to take note of them all; readers need only look at Pleynet's article to find further examples. One particularly noteworthy case occurs on the last page, where, starting from an article by B. Amengual in *Cahiers*, Pleynet passes imperceptibly to the assertion that the problematic of the cinema cannot be discussed in terms of any other discipline, and ends by denouncing attempts to make everything relevant to everything else, which he evidently considers is the motivation behind *Change's* current programme (though the review is, of course, not named): *Homer and Alexander can join hands with Rousseau, Napoleon with Lenin, Jean Paris with Saussure and everybody with everybody else, and anything with everything* – a classic example of mimetic reduplication of language by metalanguage. See also, towards the beginning of the article: *However, it is basically a concerted endeavour and acknowledged as such. There is a conspiracy of silence about the general history of the article, except for vague references to their 'revolutionary' origin* – an extraordinarily far-fetched claim, or the strange assertion that *Cahiers* have capitulated to *Change's* theories. There are many more examples.

It may of course be objected in answer to this that Pleynet is simply saving himself unnecessary effort by not distinguishing between *Change* and *Cahiers* since in his view they are both part of the bourgeois ideological front which he identified as his subject at the beginning of the article. But if he wanted to save time in this way, he should have proved that *Cahiers* and *Change* belong together as part of the bourgeois ideological front. It is true that we have quoted *Change* twice, but not as a model, or an example, but simply because on those particular occasions it seemed to us that we were studying the same things (though not in the same way nor with the same ends in view), viz the Eisenstein texts, the

historical/cultural trends in Russia between 1905 and 1920, the theory of montage (which we conceived in purely cinematic terms, and not as it might apply to other kinds of montage, and which we went on to describe as active, dynamic, transformative).⁶ Our second complaint about Pleynet's article is an extremely serious one, namely that he accuses both *Change* and ourselves of latent or manifest anti-communism. A direct confrontation on this issue can no longer be avoided: we should like to state plainly, now, so that nothing we say later can be misinterpreted, that if at one time it was possible to accuse *Cahiers* of anti-communism, it is no longer possible today. Anyone who claims the contrary is essentially still harking back to the retrogressive and essentially Christian outlook which (as has been conclusively pointed out in other quarters) characterises *Cahiers* at its inception. But today any such accusation is a slur on our principles and practice.

It will be seen what a difficult task it is to reply to an author who not only has not followed the development of our magazine, but employs the most subtle apparatus of insinuation, preterition and other polemical manoeuvres to attack us and *Change* together. To get over the last difficulty, we decided to take Pleynet's attacks *en bloc* and treat them as though they were all directed at us and simply at us, and we would ask our readers to take it that we are speaking for *Cahiers* only here, and not for any other review.

(a) *Eisenstein*. Pleynet admits that we have shown some methodological rigour in the way in which we have published the Eisenstein texts, and recognises that we try to give the maximum of historical information with every text. He also admits that we give copious notes with every text. Pleynet does refer to the article by Jean-Louis Comolli ('Le Detour par le Direct' No 209-211) but he makes no mention whatever of our 'Montage' in No 210, and the article by Jacques Aumont on 'Le Concept de Montage', (No 221) not even in order to refute them *en bloc*. As these omissions are not the only ones, in quite a long article, we must make clear what our position is:

We in France only know a minute fraction of Eisenstein's enormous out put of written work: the collection of articles entitled *Notes of a Film Director* and a few articles scattered here and there in magazines (there are also a few Italian and English editions of other sections of Eisenstein's works: *Film Form*, *Film Sense*, *Essays*, but we shall confine ourselves to the French editions here). A selection of the most 'finished' of Eisenstein's works was published in six volumes by Iskustvo Editions, Moscow, in 1964. *Cahiers* decided to introduce them to the French public, which meant, first of all, translating them. We are not influenced to take this step by fashion, or pressure from any quarter; no one urged us to do it, nor did we have any hidden motives. It is difficult to conceive on what grounds anyone should

124 object to our publishing these articles as we did, especially since *Cahiers* is *firstly* a cinema magazine (even Pleynet concedes that it is of a 'specialised nature'. As for the articles which we announced, they *will be continued* in a special number on Russia in the 20s which we have been working on for some months, and which has also already been announced.

(b) *Formalists and Futurists*. It would seem as if these groups did not concern us directly, as they belong in a zone which lies outside the cinema, and because we have published neither of them. However, partly in accordance with our decision to answer all Pleynet's accusations as though they were addressed to *Cahiers* alone, and partly because we shall be including the Formalists and Futurists in our forthcoming number on Russia, we shall respond to Pleynet's criticisms as though they were addressed to us. He argues that the Russian Formalist and Futurist texts which have recently appeared were published with the deliberate imprecision which he described at the beginning of his article as the hallmark of the bourgeois ideological front: labelled as 'revolutionary' on the fragile grounds that they were contemporaneous with the October revolution, unaccompanied by an examination of the historical origins of the movements concerned, or the petit-bourgeois class backgrounds of those who participated in them – their idealist prejudices, their empiricism, even theologism – or of the reasons which led the leaders of the revolution (Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, Zhdanov) to express reservations about them, even condemn them outright. Is it true?

In 1965, a collection of articles by the Russian Formalists which had hitherto been unknown in France was published in the *Tel Quel* series under the editorship of Tsvetan Todorov, in a volume entitled *Théorie de la Littérature*. This book excited a great stir; the articles proved an invaluable source of information for research to a great many people; it also made known an important movement in the history of literature and literary theory, and the Formalists were widely held to be the founders of a science of literature. Right up until 1968, and in *Tel Quel* itself, the articles were presented as both 'scientific' and 'revolutionary'. For example, Philippe Sollers (in 'Réflexe de Réduction' claimed that *the culmination of this activity* (on the part of the review *Tel Quel*) –

apart from the publication of a great many texts – was the appearance of the collection edited by T. Todorov entitled *Théorie de la Littérature*, which revealed to the French public a number of hitherto completely unknown works produced in Soviet Russia in the years 1920-30 by the Futurist and scientific revolutionary *avant garde*.

Later on in the same article Sollers says:

The Russian Futurists were closely allied both to the developing

science of structural linguistics, and to the political revolution, and their programme was to make everyone an active possessor of the language.

125

This was in a context where the use of abrupt, slogan-like statements could easily be attributed to a desire to be as clear and emphatic as possible, as the article is conceived in a polemical spirit, but elsewhere we still find Todorov writing as follows (*Tel Quel* No 35, Autumn 1968):

Poetry and the theory of poetry are one . . . in their writing (that of the Futurists) the difference between text and metatext has disappeared. Poetry is science . . .

OR:

the revolution in poetry goes hand in hand with political revolution. . . . To be revolutionary in literature means revolutionising poetry, not turning revolt into poetry.⁷

Today the Formalist and Futurist texts are being subjected to more rigorous examination – indeed Formalist has been *picked to pieces, right down to its linguistic foundations*, (principally in the work of Julia Kristeva and Jacques Derrida). But it remains true that a long time elapsed between the moment at which these texts were presented to the French public, and the moment when the critical and theoretical analysis of them began. In saying this, we do *not* of course mean to turn the accusations of delay or omission that Pleynet has directed in our quarter back on him, but simply to stress the fundamental point that, as the historical/cultural period under discussion is so important, so complex and so full of conflicting trends, and as none of us have yet got enough data, or had enough time to reflect adequately upon it, a long and sustained effort in research, enlightenment, synthesis and theorisation is necessary for all of us before we can come to any precise conclusions about it.⁸

(c) Objectivity

Having thus pointed out the class origins of the Formalists and the Futurists in the *petit bourgeoisie*, then recognised their adherence to the October revolution in all its manifestations, and affirmed the necessity of confronting their positions and work rigorously with the principles of the science of Marxism-Leninism, with the object of defining them *not as a fundamental transformation of bourgeois culture, but as one of its many products, requiring the transforming action of a Marxist reading in order to be decoded and assimilated*, Pleynet then moves on to denounce the current attempts to expound the value of the texts (thereby sparing himself the effort of making any such attempt), with the avowed or unavowed intention of transporting the debate onto the political plane. His argument here is that Formalism has benefited in the eyes of the European bourgeoisie by being condemned

126 by Stalinism, thus adding fuel to the fire of anti-communist criticism conducted in the name of 'freedom of expression' and 'liberty of art'. Pleyne then takes exception to a note by Luda and Jean Schnitzer on an article by Eisenstein (*Cahiers* No 213, note 20), in which they draw attention to Eisenstein's admiration for Meyerhold, and remark: *Meyerhold . . . was accused of excessive Formalism; arrested in 1939, he died in a prison camp.*⁹

Pleyne writes: no doubt they think they are supplying objective information and doing something to rehabilitate Meyerhold as a man of the theatre. But what kind of real objectivity is there in this web of ideological ambiguities. Nothing that has survived of Meyerhold's written work (see *Le Théâtre Théâtrale*) is of any theoretical interest, and our only assurance of his seriousness in this direction come from references to him by the Futurists and the Formalists, which does not do much to add credence to his case. The whole argument becomes transported then onto the political plane, but here the ground has become equally shaky. . . .

We cannot help it if Pleyne insists on seeing a cunning political manoeuvre in a straightforward and objective note (which in any case has much less to do with the opinion of L. and J. Schnitzer than it has with the relationship between Eisenstein and Meyerhold as revealed by a reference to Meyerhold in an article by Eisenstein), but we are on safe theoretical ground in objecting in our turn to Pleyne's frenetic refusal to accept anything as objective which really is objective, in particular *à propos* of Meyerhold and the notion of objectivity. At one point he writes:

While it is reasonable to assume that the young Eisenstein's artistic personality was conditioned, at least in part, by his participation in the revolutionary activity of the Red Army, the same cannot be said of his mentor. Meyerhold's career antedates the revolution by some years; he worked with Stanislavsky, and was famous enough, by 1915, to be commissioned by the Czarist cinema to direct two films.

What kind of real objectivity is there in *that* web of ideological ambiguities? None. For the following reasons:

(1) Meyerhold did work with Stanislavsky for a time, but very quickly parted company with him for *theoretical* (and not personal) reasons, as he was opposed to the naturalist, psychologist preconceptions of the 'Arts Theatre'.

(2) Meyerhold did put on a large number of theatrical productions before the October revolution and even made two films, but he was never a 'Tsarist' film-maker, applauded by the Tsarist order (the reader will note the difference between Pleyne's ambiguity, and that of the note he complained about) nor a favourite or official film-maker. It is also a known fact that Meyer-

hold did not wait for the October revolution to adopt revolutionary sympathies: to quote Nina Gourfinkel's introduction to *Le Théâtre Théâtrale*: 127

Meyerhold managed for years to adapt himself to the heavily conservative tone of the imperial theatres, but his revolutionary sympathies were of long date. Under the Tsarist regime, Ponza was a residential meeting place for politically active people: populists, old Marxists, Polish resistance fighters, among them many students and writers. . . .

(c) We are touching here on a point of extreme importance in relation to the famous notion of objectivity: a little way prior to the quotation about Meyerhold which we have cited. Pleynet notes that the Futurists and Formalists immediately took up their position on the side of the socialist revolution. He even quotes the declarations of two of the only five people to respond, the very day after the revolution, to the general invitation issued to the Russian intelligentsia by the central executive committee of Russia, the supreme organ of the new regime. We stress that there were *only five*, two of whom he mentions: Mayakovsky and Blok. Mayakovsky commented *To accept or not to accept. . . . I never even asked myself. This revolution was my revolution.* Blok, a little later, replied to the question *Can we intelligentsia work with the Bolsheviks* with *They can and must.* Pleynet quotes as his source an article by Dmitri Blagoi, which appeared in *Oeuvres et Opinions* in January 1960 in Moscow: *Aux Sources de la Littérature Soviétique* (reprinted in *Tel Quel*, No 37). Now, either Pleynet had no other source of reference (but that is no excuse, when one's object is to discredit someone by omission) or else has had other more detailed sources, but deliberately cut out certain details (which is even more serious). For what he does not mention is that the three people who accompanied Blok and Mayakovsky were Ryuri Ivnev, Nathan Elman and Vsevolod Meyerhold who immediately, wholeheartedly and irrevocably rallied to the revolution (Jay Leyda: *Kino: a History of the Russian and Soviet Film*, London 1960). We would ask our readers, and the readers of *Cinéthique* to decide in view of the foregoing whether Pleynet can really be described as objective, and whether this time there are not some *real* grounds for talking about manoeuvres.

(4) Finally, to finish with the question of Meyerhold, it might be of interest to recall the following: Pleynet rightly points out in his article that *Eisenstein's theoretical work constantly refers back to his experience and production as a film maker, and that these are his first and most usual points of reference for defining his concepts.* Pleynet claims that it is absolutely necessary to relate theoretical reflection and practical realisation, particularly in the case of theory and practice in heterogeneous fields which cannot be assimilated to each other (in Eisenstein's case, cinematic praxis

128 and theoretical reflection embodied in language). One would have thought that this dictum should apply equally to the treatment of Meyerhold. But Pleynet, not content with falsifying the details of his biography and his aesthetic and political positions in the manner we have described, and declaring baldly that *nothing that has survived of Meyerhold's written work is of any theoretical interest* (which is a bit excessive, even if Meyerhold's written work leaves a great deal to be desired in terms of rigour, breadth, clarity and precision of terminology) scarcely mentions the great importance of Meyerhold's practical achievement in the theatre: its importance at the time of the revolution, its importance for later theatrical practice, indeed, even for the theory of the theatre that was to come, as elaborated by Artaud for instance. A quotation from a draft of a letter by Artaud to René Daumal confirms this (*Oeuvres Complètes*, Vol LLL p 215-216, Gallimard):

And from now on we shall have to reckon with all the necessities of visual harmony in a theoretical production . . . just as after Meyerhold and Appia we have to reckon with the architectural conception of decor, not only in depth but in height, and perspective created with real masses and volumes, not just an appearance of perspective created with *trompe l'oeil* painting and flat surfaces.

and again

an attempt was made to supersede this conception of man in the throes of extatic confrontation with his personal monsters by a theatre of action and the masses, in Russia during the revolution, and it was the only time such an attempt has succeeded as theatre.

(d) This discussion, which began with a few lines from an article, might seem to have strayed far away from the article in question, and from Eisenstein. In point of fact, we have not left either of them for an instant. But let us return to Pleynet's remarks on Eisenstein, some of which are perfectly sound: for instance

We must re-read Eisenstein today, and when we publish his work we must analyse it. . . . I simply wish to point out that Eisenstein's written works are closely linked to a precise historical context, and that the critic cannot, on pain of exposing himself as a fool or a fraud, attempt to analyse their meaning except through a documented and critical reading of their relationship to that context. . . . Scattered through the texts (Eisenstein's) there is an accumulation of original insights, theoretical details and methodological corrections which . . . have to be carried over from one article to another. . . . The biography of the author (participation in the revolution, travels in Europe and the United States, return from the United States, etc) has to be taken into account in the same way.

But Pleynet is not always so mindful of his own demands for prudence and accuracy: at another point we discover him confidently asserting, on the basis of a selected fragment from the article 'perspectives' (*Cahiers* 209) which admittedly is written in a wild, lyrical/impressionistic style, and a statement made by Eisenstein towards the end of his life to the effect that he had not yet found the solution to his theoretical research, that he had a *theological* conception of the cinema, that he had never freed himself from *metaphysical illusions*, that he was an idealist in the line of Mach and Bogdanov, and that Hegelian idealism was the *dominant principle* of his work. It is true that these assertions have a grain of truth in them, but they are so inadequately substantiated and worked out as to be entirely unsatisfactory. Similarly the term 'dominant principle' would need a much greater theoretical backing before it could be usefully employed in the context. For the problem is much more complex than that; and it is very strange that Pleynet, who is sufficiently aware of the problem to formulate it should behave as if he were not aware of its ramifications. If we leave aside the whole complicating issue of the relationship of Eisenstein's writings to his films, we can still find, in the very small part of the writings that are accessible to us in France at the moment:

- unequivocally idealist concepts, idealistically formulated
- passionate declarations of materialism, whose credentials as such would need to be rigorously investigated
- materialist concepts imprecisely formulated
- materialist concepts formulated with outstanding rigour.

In practising any such analysis, one must of course avoid the pitfall pointed out by Althusser *à propos* of interpreting the writings of the young Marx, which consists in gearing one's analysis of any given work to the presupposition that some of its elements are (still) idealist, while others are (already) materialist, just as one should equally avoid the pitfall of taking the final stage or the totality of the author's work as a kind of 'revealed truth' which is to be used as a touchstone for assessing the meaning of every text, or fragment of a text (teleological/analytic criticism). We must read Eisenstein today as materialists, that is to say: read the text as a whole whose elements lose their specific characteristics in becoming part of the *active and living unity* of the whole; think out the specific problematic of the text as a structure determined by the *totality of its relations* (relationship of reflection to its objects, modes of reflection) and after that place this specific problematic in relation to other contemporary problematics in the ideological field, and finally discover in what form and in what way *real history* impinged on the field of those ideologies, and of the particular ideology one is studying. To assert that Eisenstein's writings are simply a part of the broad history of ideas which extends from Berkeley to Hegel, or from

- 130 Mach to Bogdanov is to assume, oneself, a place in the tranquil, autonomous, self-sufficient stream of the history of ideology, that 'no man's land' of ideology which has no history at all properly speaking, to take refuge in ideological immanence. Which is as Hegelian, or neo-Hegelian, as we have been accused of being.

Part III

That Pleynet is perfectly aware of all these arguments goes without saying; indeed, the article was written *with the purpose* of expounding them. So what mechanism is there which pushes him to destroy his own position step by step, to contradict the basis of his argument as he develops it, to deny its determining principles while attempting to advance them, to lump people and phenomena together when they do not belong together in order to denounce the same practice in others; to make imprudent assertions in the same breath in which he urges prudence and attention to detail on others, to dodge important points while urging others to be specific, to 'terrorise' in the illusion that he is theorising. In our opinion it is because he was writing this article not simply as an argument but as polemic, that he adopted an indirect style of sarcasm and irony for that purpose, and that this led him to produce the argument in ways that he would not otherwise have chosen, expanding it here, contracting it there, introducing parts of it prematurely. Pleynet talks scathingly about the sort of *alliances* which inevitably mean making theoretical concessions but the fact is that he knows (he cannot not know) that he is using *Cinéthique* to attack *Change* (for it is, principally, *Change* that he is attacking) that *Cinéthique* is making use of Pleynet's desire to attack *Change* in order to attack *Cahiers*, just as *Cinéthique*, despite its declarations of rigour, is constantly playing off leftism against communism, Godard against Pleynet, Seban against Lajournade, syndicalism against anarchism – and *vice versa*.

Notes

6. The word *montage* seems to irritate Pleynet particularly (to the point of preventing him from even noticing our debate on the term). Sometimes (with *Change* in mind) he pretends to think it means 'analogical model', 'collage', 'juggling', juxtaposition of all sorts of disparate material in the hope that something of interest will emerge, sometimes as a gratuitous play on form. Do we really need to remind him that the term *montage* implies a process specific to the cinema, and that when we talk about montage in *Cahiers* it is always the cinematic process that we mean?

7. In his introduction to *Théorie de la Littérature* Todorov does highlight the Formalists' naively proclaimed positivism, and their declared empiricism, but it is not in order to cast doubt on their methodology or their theoretical presuppositions, still less to relate the above-mentioned attitudes with any precision to current history or their class origins. He simply concludes that both attitudes proceeded from a

lack of knowledge of what they were able to do, or even of the import of the step they were taking (allied to a very definite wish to escape the charge of scientism or theoreticism).

131

8. Kristeva's and Derrida's critical enquiry into the idealist presuppositions of a school of thought based upon the sign, is extremely broadly-based, and goes way beyond the specific historical problem of the Russian Formalists and Futurists. Research of the type recommended by Pleynet would *still* be very appropriate to this problem.

9. Our note reads as follows: *Meyerhold (1874-1941) was accused of excessive Formalism; arrested in 1939, he died in a camp.* In *Cinétique* it reads *was accused of excessive formalism, arrested in 1939 he died in a camp.* It might seem a minor difference, or be the result (we hope) of a printer's error, but the replacement of a semi-colon by a comma considerably modifies the meaning of the note which Pleynet is criticising. In the *Cahiers* version, there is certainly a relation between the charge of excessive Formalism, the arrest and death of such a unique personality as Meyerhold. But the direct liaison (absence of punctuation) is between his arrest and his death. But in the *Cinétique* version the arrest is moved forward towards the accusation of Formalism and it is possible to read the phrase as a *consequential* sequence. In *Cahiers* the semi-colon indicates that the events occurred in a certain temporal sequence, but does not indicate that the one was a consequence of the other. Pleynet would do well to take an example from our accuracy.

(From *Cahiers du Cinéma*, No 217, 1969. Reprinted with the permission of the Editors.)

Translated by Susan Bennett

Dear Screen,

. . . I would like to draw your attention to the articles of Lev Kuleshov translated with an introduction by Ronald Levaco. I would like to query certain points in this introduction which I believe to be inaccurate and confusing.

These occur on page 107 of the Winter issue. Mr Levaco is drawing the parallel between the syntagm and system of Barthes' terminology with the metaphor and metonymy of Jakobson's. On page 60 of the Cape edition of *Elements of Semiology* by Barthes this distinction is stated: the opposition of the metaphor (of the systematic order) and the metonymy (of the syntagmatic order). On page 59 the term *associative plane* is identified in its progression through *paradigmatic plane* to *systematic plane* the term adopted by Barthes. However Mr Levaco states on page 107 . . . 'For as Kuleshov saw it and Shklovsky didn't, the meaning one makes in the film affirms for one an *associational*, *syntagmatic* meaning of being-in-the-world – the world taken as an aggregate system of (set of all) signs, in which each shot is an anchorage point (a subset) (Barthes, *Elements* p49)'. It appears in the context that *associational* and *syntagmatic* are represented as *similar* whereas in Barthes they are *opposed*. Similarly . . . 'the world taken as an aggregate system of (set of all) signs . . .' would correspond to the *systematic* (associative relationships) plane of signification *not* the syntagmatic. This would appear to be a contradiction in terms. This practice is repeated in the next paragraph where *syntagmatic* is coupled with *associational* in parenthesis. 'The montage of Kuleshov's conception thus elaborates into a semiology of syntagmatic (associational) relationships' . . .

The function of *associational* in this context is either redundant or contradictory. While I agree with Mr Levaco's conclusion that Kuleshov's montage acquires signification at the syntagmatic level and therefore operates as a model of the metonymic order it is not clear from the text that *associational* is the older term used by Saussure and is identical for all practical purposes to *systematic* as employed by Barthes. It is therefore not clear whether Mr Levaco is confusing *system* with *syntagm*, or *metaphor* with *metonymy*. I would be pleased to hear Mr Levaco's views on this matter, and commend his presentation of an important, interesting and informative document.

I am
Yours sincerely
Eric W. Knight

SCREEN INDEX

1969-1971 (Volumes 10-12)

Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard (review)

v 10 n 1 pp 90-95

Les Biches v 10 n 2 pp 79-85

Film Scripts (compilation) v 10 n 2 pp 111-112

Studies of Directors (compilation) v 10 n 3 pp 110-111

Michael Balcon Presents v 10 n 4/5 pp 180-185

A Polemic v 10 n 6 pp 75-79

The Comic Art of Jaques Tati v 10 n 1 pp 68-80

Comment on Don Allen's article on Chabrol, p 55 of same issue

v 11 n 1 pp 66-67.

AMSDEN, PETER C.

Composing for Films: Michael J. Lewis interviewed v 11 n 2

pp 80-85

ALLEN, DON

Claude Chabrol v 11 n 1 pp 55-65

BEATTIE, NICHOLAS,

Film in the A-Level Modern Language Course v 12 n 3 pp 121-127

BOLAS, TERRY

The Left Handed Gun of Arthur Penn v 10 n 1 pp 15-23

Film Making in Schools: D. Lowndes (review) v 10 n 1 pp 95-99

Oh! What a Lovely War v 10 n 3 pp 84-80

SEFT Nineteenth Annual Report 1969-70: Developments in Film Education v 11 n 3 pp 96-111

BREWSTER, BEN

Structuralism in Film Criticism v 12 n 1 pp 49-58

Introduction to translations from *Novy Lef* v 12 n 4 pp 59-66

BROWN, ROGER L.

Social Concern, the Mass Media and Violence v 11 n 4/5 pp 3-15

BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE

See v 12 n 3 pp 2-8, 13-26, 27-43

BUDGEN, SUZANNE

Word and Image: I. Nemeskürty (review) v 10 n 3 pp 96-103

La Règle du Jeu v 11 n 1 pp 3-13

The Festival of the Hungarian Feature Film: Pécs 1969

v 11 n 2 pp 58-63

Je T'Aime Je T'Aime v 11 n 3 pp 88-95

The Films of Robert Bresson: I. Cameron (review)

v 11 n 3 pp 114-115

BUSCOMBE, EDWARD

The Idea of Genre in American Cinema v 11 n 2 pp 33-45

Kiss Kiss Bang Bang and *Styles of Radical Will* (reviews)

v 11 n 3 pp 115-117

Dickens and Hitchcock v 11 n 4/5 pp 97-114

Compiling a Study Unit v 11 n 6 pp 61-66

Samuel Fuller: P. Hardy (review) v 11 n 6 pp 88-90

SEFT Summer School v 12 n 3 p 119

The New Priesthood: J. Bakewell & N. Garnham (review)

v 12 n 3 pp 157-160

CAMPER, FRED

The Films of Douglas Sirk v 12 n 2 pp 44-62

The Tarnished Angels v 12 n 2 pp 68-93

CANHAM, KINGSLEY

Fritz Lang in America: P. Bogdanovich (review) v 10 n 1 pp 85-90

Hollywood in the 40s: C. Higham & J. Greenberg (review)

v 10 n 2 pp 97-103

Samuel Fuller's Action Films v 10 n 6 pp 80-92

The Studio v 11 n 1 pp 81-86

(and JIM COOK) Interview with Abraham Polonsky

v 11 n 3 pp 57-73

COCKBURN, SARAH

Censorship in the Movies: R. S. Randall (review)

v 10 n 3 pp 103-106

COE, BRIAN

Friese Green and Cinematography v 10 n 2 pp 25-41

Friese Green and the Origins of Cinematography II

v 10 n 3 pp 72-83

The Origins of Motion Pictures and The First Colour Motion
Pictures v 10 n 3 pp 106-107

Friese Green and the Origins of Cinematography III

v 10 n 4/5 pp 129-147

CRICK, PHILIP

Hugh Whitmore interview v 10 n 2 pp 7-24

Three East European Directors: Makavejev, Menzel, Jancsó

v 11 n 2 pp 64-71

COOK, JIM

Buster Keaton: D. Robinson (review) v 10 n 4/5 pp 178-180

Bonnie and Clyde v 10 n 4/5 pp 101-114

Unamerican Activities v 11 n 3 pp 74-77

(and KINGSLEY CANHAM) Interview with Abraham Polonsky

v 11 n 3 pp 57-93

COLLINS, RICHARD

Genre: A Reply to Ed Buscombe v 11 n 4/5 pp 66-75

CROFTS, STEPHEN

Film Education in England and Wales v 11 n 6 pp 3-22

COMOLLI, J.-L./NARBONI, JEAN

Cinema/Ideology/Criticism I v 12 n 1 pp 27-38

Cinema/Ideology/Criticism II v 12 n 2 pp 145-155

COUBRO, GERRY

Art History and Film Studies in Art Colleges v 12 n 3 pp 115-118

COULTASS, CLIVE

The German Film 1933-1945 v 12 n 2 pp 38-41

ELSAESSER, THOMAS

Documents on Sirk – Postscript v 12 n 2 pp 20-28

EVES, VICKI

Britain's Social Cinema v 10 n 6 pp 51-66

The Structure of the British Film Industry v 11 n 1 pp 41-54

The Effect of Violence in the Cinema v 11 n 3 pp 31-42

EXTON, RICHARD

Film in the Humanities Curriculum Project – Practical

v 11 n 2 pp 52-57

FAIRSERVICE, DONALD

The Miracle Worker v 10 n 2 pp 69-78

- 136 FARGIER, J.-P.
 Parenthesis or Indirect Route v 12 n 2 pp 131-144
- FILMER, PAUL
 Three Frankenheimer Films: a sociological approach
 v 10 n 4/5 pp 160-173
- FINLER, JOEL
 Stroheim's *Walking Down Broadway* v 11 n 4/5 pp 89-96
- FRANSECKY, ROGER
 Visual Literacy and the Teaching of the Disadvantaged
 v 11 n 6 pp 23-32
- GARTEN, H. F.
 The Theatre of Expressionism v 12 n 2 pp 29-37
- GALE, TOM
Pasolini on Pasolini (review) v 11 n 1 p 99
 Working in the Pressure Cooker: Douglas Camfield talks to Tom
 Gale v 11 n 2 pp 72-79
- GODARD, J.-L.
 Tears and Speed – *A Time to Love and a Time to Die*
 v 12 n 2 pp 95-98
- GOUGH-YATES, KEVIN
Hitchcock, Francois Truffaut (review) v 10 n 1 pp 74-84
 Seth Holt interview v 10 n 6 pp 4-23
The Chase v 10 n 4/5 pp 88-100
- GROSZ, DAVE
The First Legion: Vision and Perception in Sirk
 v 12 n 2 pp 8-13
- HARCOURT, PETER
 In Defence of Film History v 11 n 6 pp 75-87
- HILLIER, JIM
 Arthur Penn v 10 n 1 pp 5-14
 (and ANDREW MCTAGGART) Humanities Curriculum Project –
On Movies, Dwight Macdonald. *A World of Film*: Stanley Kauff-
 mann (reviews) v 11 n 6 90-92
Negative Space, Manny Farber (review) v 12 n 3 pp 161-164
Discovery in Film, R. Heyer & A. Meyer v 11 n 4/5 pp 131-132
 Tyneside: The North East Educational Film Project
 v 12 n 3 pp 51-55
 Theory v 11 n 2 pp 46-51
- HUDSON, ROGER
 Camera Adventure v 10 n 2 pp 56-68
- JOHNS, PHILIP
Mamoulian, Tom Milne (review) v 11 n 1 pp 96-99
- JOHNSON, CLAIRE
 Film Journals: Britain and France v 12 n 1 pp 39-46
- KATZ, JOHN
 An integrated approach to teaching of film and literature
 v 11 n 4/5 pp 56-65
- KNIGHT, ROY
 Film in English Teaching v 11 n 6 pp 67-74

LEBLANC, GERARD

Direction v 12 n 3 pp 121-131

LEF

Documents: Brik, Mayakovsky, Vertov, v 12 n 4 pp 32-58

LEWIS, PETER M.

'Not so much a programme More a Way of Life'

v 11 n 4/5 pp 16-30

LOVELL, ALAN

Robin Wood — a Dissenting View v 10 n 2 pp 42-55

The Common Pursuit of true Judgment v 11 n 4/5 pp 76-88

The BFI and Film Education v 12 n 3 pp 13-26

LOVELL, TERRY

Sociology and the Cinema v 12 n 1 pp 15-26

LOWNDES, DOUGLAS

Encyclopedia of Film and TV Techniques v 11 n 2 pp 90-91

LEVACO, RON

Kuleshov and Semiology: Selections from Lev Kuleshov's *Art of the Cinema* v 12 n 4 pp 103-121

MACDONALD, SUSAN

Pasolini: Rebellion, Art and a New Society v 10 n 3 pp 19-34

16mm Film Availability v 10 n 6 pp 45-50

MILLAR, DANIEL

The Use of Extracts in Film Teaching v 10 n 4/5 pp 67-79

MCTAGGART, ANDREW

Signs and Meaning in the Cinema: P. Wollen (review)

v 10 n 6 pp 67-75

See also HILLIER, JIM v 11 n 2, Film in the Humanities Curriculum Project

MCARTHUR, COLIN

Sam Fuller's Gangster Films v 10 n 6 pp 93-101

Problems of Providing Film Study Materials v 11 n 2 pp 16-21

Horror in the Movies, The Cinema of Roman Polanski, I. Butler (review) v 12 n 1 pp 59-61

MCAFFREY, DONALD

The Golden Age of Sound Comedy v 11 n 1 pp 27-40

The Crazy Mirror, R. Durgnat (review) v 11 n 2 pp 92-95

MASTERMAN, LEN

Cul de Sac: through the mirror of surrealism v 11 n 6 pp 44-60

MURRAY, JOHN C.

Robin Wood and the Structural Critics v 12 n 3 pp 101-110

MAYAKOVSKY, V.

Scenarios (translations) v 12 n 4 pp 122-144

See also MITCHELL, STANLEY, v 12 n 4 p 152, Marinetti and Mayakovsky

NARBONI, JEAN

See COMOLLI, J.-L. v 12 ns 1 & 2

NEW LEF

(*Novy Lef*) Documents: Shklovsky, Tretyakov, Brik,

v 12 n 4 pp 67-100

NOBLE, GRANT

Young Children and Television v 11 n 4/5 pp 31-47

- 138 NOGUEZ, DOMINIQUE
Teaching Cinema at the University v 12 n 3 pp 129-141
- O'MEARA, ROBERT
2001: *A Space Odyssey* v 10 n 1 pp 104-112
- PATTISON, BARRIE
see WICKING, CHRISTOPHER v 10 n 4/5 Interviews with Anthony Mann
- PRINGLE, ASHLEY
An Introduction to a critique of Television v 12 n 1 pp 63-71
Violence on the Screen: A. Glucksmann (review)
v 12 n 3 pp 152-156
- ROBERTSON, GEORGE
Film in English teaching v 10 n 4/5 pp 80-87
- ROHDIE, SAM
Education and Criticism v 12 n 1 pp 9-13
- ROSENTHAL, ALAN
Diary of a TV Documentary v 11 n 1 pp 87-94
- RYALL, TOM
The Notion of Genre v 11 n 2 pp 22-32
Sergei Eisenstein, L. Moussinac (review) v 12 n 4 pp 168-171
- SHERWOOD, RICHARD
Introduction to *Lef* Documents v 12, n 4 pp 25-32
- SPIERS, DAVID
If... v 10 n 2 pp 85-89
An Interview with Michael Winner v 10 n 3 pp 5-18
Interview with Jack Gold v 10 n 4/5 pp 115-128
- SUBOTSKY, MILTON
The work of a Film Producer v 10 n 6 pp 24-32
- SYMONDS, ELFREDA
For Film Study at Hammersmith College v 10 n 1 pp 42-66
- TARRATT, MARGARET
L'Etranger v 10 n 1 pp 99-103
Rosemary's Baby v 10 n 2 pp 90-96
Film Makers on Film Making v 10 n 3 pp 108-109
Books on Hollywood v 10 n 4/5 pp 174-178
James Cellan Jones and the Classic Serial v 10 n 6 pp 33-44
Books on Godard v 11 n 2 pp 86-88
Lindsay Anderson, E. Sussex (review) v 11 n 2 pp 88-90
The Damned v 11 n 3 pp 44-87
The Celluloid Muse: C. Higham & J. Greenberg (review)
v 11 n 3 pp 112-114
- TERRY, JOHN
The Future of the British Film Industry v 11 n 4/5 pp 115-128
- THOMPSON, RICHARD
The American Film Institute v 12 n 3 pp 57-95
- TREVELYAN, JOHN
Film and Measurement of its Effects v 10 n 4/5 pp 148-159
Film Censorship in Great Britain v 11 n 3 pp 19-30

Genre: Theory and Mispractice in Film Criticism

v 11 n 6 pp 33-43

Elective Affinities: the Myth of German Expressionism

v 12 n 3 pp 143-150

VANNOEY, R. C.

*Movies and How They are Made, When Pictures Began to Move,
and When Movies Began to Speak* (reviews)

v 11 n 4/5 pp 130-131

WALKER, MICHAEL

Billy Wilder v 10 n 2 pp 103-108

Mickey One v 10 n 3 pp 60-71

WATKINS, ROGER

Film Teaching and TV at Bulmershe v 10 n 1 pp 34-41

WELCH, TED

Communication on Wood/Lovell debate v 12 n 3 p 111

WHANNEL, PADDY

The problem of Film Availability v 10 n 1 pp 67-73

Film Education and Film Culture v 10 n 3 pp 49-59

Servicing the Teacher vol 11 n 4/5 pp 48-55

WICKING, CHRISTOPHER

Budd Boetticher v 10 n 4/5 pp 9-31

(and B. PATTISSON) Interviews with Anthony Mann

v 10 n 4/5 pp 32-54

Interview with Delmer Daves v 10 n 4/5 pp 55-66

Horizons West: J. Kitses v 11 n 1 pp 95-96

Film Review: M. Speed v 11 n 1 p 100

WILLEMAN, PAUL

Distanciation and Douglas Sirk v 12 n 2 pp 63-67

WILLIAMS, CHRISTOPHER

The Effects of Television, ed J. D. Halloran and *Television and*

Delinquency, Halloran, Brown & Chaney v 12 n 1 pp 72-75

Politics and Production (Godard) v 12 n 4 pp 6-24

WILLIAMS, DAVID

An Actors Revenge v 11 n 2 pp 3-15

WINNER, MICHAEL

The Work of an Independent Film Producer v 11 n 3 pp 78-87

WOLLEN, PETER

'Some thoughts on Stanley Mitchell's Article' v 12 n 4 pp 162-166

Introduction to Mayakovsky Scenarios v 12 n 4 pp 122-124

REFERENCE MATERIAL

Check list of books in print: Film Scripts v 10 n 2 pp 112-2

Studies of Directors v 10 n 3 pp 110-1

Select list of books in print: Film History v 10 n 4/5 pp 187-91

Books on British Cinema v 10 n 6 pp 108-9

Select Booklist on Theory of Film v 11 n 1 pp 101-2

Cinema Reference Books Part I v 11 n 2 pp 96-8

Cinema Reference Books Part II v 11 n 4/5 pp 133-6

16mm Distributors - a selective list v 11 n 4/5 pp 137-46

Popular Culture and Mass Media Studies - a select reading list

v 11 n 4/5 pp 148-71